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Comprehensive review of special political missions

Overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/89, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report regarding overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including efforts towards improving expertise and effectiveness, transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender perspective and women's equal participation. The report, which is the sixth to the Assembly on this issue, covers the period from August 2017 to July 2018.

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I. Introduction

1. Special political missions remain critical assets for the United Nations response to growing global peace and security challenges and they continue to evolve to meet new requirements. The missions vary considerably with regard to their mandates, scope, institutional design and approaches. They range from special envoys and representatives carrying out good offices mandates to monitoring teams, groups and panels overseeing Security Council sanctions regimes, small field-based missions delivering on specialized tasks such as disarmament, and multidimensional operations with comprehensive mandates to support political transitions and efforts to build sustainable peace. Three United Nations regional offices in Central Africa, Central Asia and West Africa serve as forward platforms for preventive diplomacy and dialogue and work very closely with their regional counterparts on transnational peace and security issues affecting the regions in which they are based.

2. Special political missions today operate in increasingly complex and, in many cases, highly unstable security situations. In environments marked by regionalized conflicts and intercommunal tensions, large numbers of refugees and displaced persons, and mounting cross-border threats such as transnational organized crime, arms proliferation and terrorism, they work in an increasingly integrated manner with United Nations entities, including country teams and peacekeeping operations. In doing so, special political missions have had to become more flexible in carrying out their mandates while managing new risks.

3. Prevention is a cornerstone of all aspects of the work of the United Nations and the role played by special political missions as part of this approach is critical. Efforts to improve the effectiveness, transparency, accountability and representativeness of special political missions must include, at their core, a focus on mission capacities to strengthen prevention of the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. As part of these efforts, I have made it a priority that special political missions and other field-based operations increase their cooperation with and support to regional and subregional organizations in the area of conflict prevention and sustaining peace.

4. The ongoing efforts to strengthen the United Nations system, notably through the initiatives currently under way to reposition the United Nations development system, adjust its peace and security architecture, update its management and administrative arrangements and increase its capacity and analysis related to gender, will further support the United Nations in delivering on its mandates, including those of special political missions. In particular, the establishment of a joint regional pillar in the restructured future Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations will ensure better support to the work of special political missions, as well as comprehensive and integrated regional approaches. I look forward to the full operationalization of my reforms next January.

5. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/89, in which the Assembly requested me to submit a report regarding overall policy matters pertaining to special political missions, including efforts towards improving expertise and effectiveness, transparency, accountability, geographical representation, gender perspective and women's equal participation. The report, which is the sixth to the Assembly on this issue, covers developments from August 2017 to July 2018. Section II of the report focuses on key operational developments during the reporting period. Section III provides a summary of the interactive dialogue with Member States on special political missions held in New York on 9 July 2018. Section IV addresses various policy issues pertaining to special political

missions and section V contains some observations on the importance of this tool and ways to strengthen it further.

II. Key operational developments

6. The present section provides, in summarized form, an update on key developments concerning the operations of special political missions in the reporting period, from August 2017 to July 2018.

7. In the Great Lakes region, the Office of my Special Envoy, together with the African Union and other regional bodies, continued to support the implementation of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework for the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Region. The Office of my Special Envoy and the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, together with representatives of the Governments of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda and Uganda and the other guarantors of the Framework, launched a follow-up mechanism in April 2018 for the repatriation of disarmed former combatants of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda and their dependants living in transit camps in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, as well as former combatants of the Mouvement du 23 mars and their dependants who currently reside in camps in Rwanda and Uganda.

8. In support of sustainable development efforts, the Office of my Special Envoy for the Great Lakes region continued to promote the operationalization of the Great Lakes regional strategic framework, which harmonizes United Nations action in the region by aligning programmatic and political interventions in support of the objectives of the Peace, Security and Cooperation Framework. In this regard, specific cross-border projects are identified in the regional strategic framework, which contribute to addressing the root causes of regional instability and promoting cooperation among the countries of the region, including in the areas of natural resources, economic integration, mobility, youth, gender and the rule of law.

9. During the reporting period, my Special Envoy led several initiatives to promote concerted regional and international support for dialogue and political processes, notably in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Burundi, and continued to promote the participation of women in political processes across the Great Lakes region. At my Special Envoy's initiative, following consultations with the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region and in cooperation with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), high-level solidarity missions by women leaders representing the United Nations, the African Network of Women in Conflict Prevention and Peace Mediation (FemWise) and the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region were deployed to Burundi, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan in July and August 2018. The objective of the missions was to promote women's concerns and participation in decision-making and in peace and political processes in the region.

10. The Office of my Special Envoy for Burundi supported the inter-Burundi dialogue, which is led by the East African Community. The joint technical working group, composed of the East African Community, the African Union and the United Nations, held four meetings in September, November and December 2017 to pave the way for further dialogue. The Special Envoy travelled to Burundi in November and December 2017 and held consultations in Addis Ababa with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission and its Commissioner for Peace and Security in January and March 2018 respectively, on how the United Nations and the African Union can further support the efforts of the East African Community. The resumption of the East

African Community-led dialogue will be critical to resolving differences among the parties ahead of expected elections in 2020. The Special Envoy will continue to explore options with the East African Community and the African Union to move the process forward.

11. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) continued to play a key role in coordinating support from the international community for the political process and overall engagement in the country, including for the Federal Government's political road map for inclusive politics, 2017–2020. As part of its electoral support mandate, set out in Security Council resolutions 2358 (2017) and 2408 (2018), UNSOM is providing capacity-building, technical and strategic advice to the National Independent Electoral Commission and the Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in preparation for the 2020/21 elections. UNSOM has also been supporting the Government of Somalia in the security and rule of law sectors, in particular in establishing the national security architecture, with close interlinkages with the transition plan for the handover of security responsibilities from the African Union Mission in Somalia to Somali national security forces. As part of its human rights mandate, UNSOM continued to engage in monitoring and capacity-building efforts, including to promote respect for human rights, women's empowerment and child protection; prevent conflict-related sexual violence and gender-based violence; and strengthen justice institutions and help to ensure accountability, in particular with respect to crimes against women and children.

12. UNSOM is also providing increasing support to the Federal Government's reinforced initiative on peace and reconciliation processes, in particular for the consolidation of the formation of the Federal State, as well as mediation, prevention and resolution of conflicts. UNSOM has assisted the Ministry of the Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation in developing its national reconciliation framework and establishing a group of friends of reconciliation. The group comprises Member States, regional and international organizations and civil society and supports local inter-clan reconciliation processes. This effort seeks to build on experiences from 2017, including the facilitation of a ceasefire agreement between Puntland and Galmudug over the disputed border town of Gaalkacyo, followed by the establishment of a joint policing mechanism to monitor the implementation of that agreement.

13. During the reporting period, the Office of my Special Envoy for the Sudan and South Sudan, working in close collaboration with the African Union High-level Implementation Panel, continued to promote the resolution of outstanding issues from the comprehensive peace agreement. It pursued arrangements to strengthen bilateral relations between the Sudan and South Sudan and to address related internal conflicts in both countries that are an impediment to the normalization of bilateral relations. The Office encouraged the parties to engage in the establishment of temporary arrangements on the final status of Abyei. Furthermore, in partnership with the High-level Implementation Panel, the Office continued to support the negotiations between the Government of the Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army-North to find a settlement to the conflict in the Two Areas (Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States).

14. Working in close partnership with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union, the Office of my Special Envoy further supported efforts to engage with the parties towards a political solution to the conflict in South Sudan. It provided extensive support, including shuttle diplomacy, in the lead-up to the IGAD-led high-level revitalization forum, which resulted in the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement in December 2017. The Office of my Special Envoy also sought to establish close working relations and a shared strategy between the United Nations, the African Union and IGAD.

15. In Liberia, the United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) worked in close coordination with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and regional and international partners to promote and ensure a peaceful environment in the run up to the general elections held on 10 October 2017 and the second round of the presidential election conducted on 26 December 2017. In addition, UNOWAS contributed, in coordination with UNMIL, to the deployment of former President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria, a member of my High-level Advisory Board on Mediation, to complement good offices efforts in support of a peaceful resolution of electoral disputes and an orderly democratic transition in the country. Overall, the efforts of UNOWAS contributed to the peaceful and successful conduct of the electoral process, which culminated in the swearing-in of President George Manneh Weah on 22 January 2018.

16. During the reporting period, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) continued to work towards the implementation of the United Nations action plan for Libya, with a view to assisting in the completion of the transition period. The action plan included a dialogue on drafting a constitution and a national conference process; efforts to unify State institutions; discussions on military and security issues; and preparations for the holding of elections before the end of 2018. UNSMIL also gradually increased its rotational presence in Libya while maintaining an office in Tunis.

17. On 28 February 2018, the Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2404 (2018) extending the mandate of the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS) for one year, until 28 February 2019. The resolution identified a focused set of priorities for UNIOGBIS and requested me to provide regular reports on the situation, as well as an assessment of the Mission, including options for a possible reconfiguration of the United Nations presence and the re-prioritization of tasks. Pursuant to the Council's resolution, I deployed a technical assessment mission to assist UNIOGBIS in reorienting its posture to align with the revised mandate and established an inclusive change management team to ensure its swift implementation. In line with its revised mandate, UNIOGBIS is focusing on support to the holding of legislative elections in 2018. Assessments are that progress on support for constitutional review, which is another mandated priority of the Mission, will be contingent on the timely and successful conduct of these elections.

18. The Office of my Special Envoy for Syria held the eighth round of political talks in Geneva from 28 November to 14 December 2017 and a special ninth round of intra-Syrian talks in Vienna from 23 to 27 January 2018, pursuant to Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and the Action Group for Syria Final Communiqué of June 2012. My Special Envoy also pursued the discussion around the establishment of the constitutional committee in Geneva, consistent with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015) and building on the final statement of the Congress of the Syrian National Dialogue held in Sochi, Russian Federation, on 29 and 30 January 2018. As an initial step, my Special Envoy invited the guarantors of the Astana process as well as the "small group" (France, Germany, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and United States of America) to Geneva in June 2018 to continue diplomatic efforts to promote common ground among international players in support of a Syrian-led and Syrian-owned, United Nations-facilitated political process.

19. The Office of my Special Envoy for Syria also continued its engagement with the Syrian Women's Advisory Board and the Civil Society Support Room. The Office hosted the International Syria Support Group's task forces on a ceasefire and humanitarian access, including in support of implementing Security Council

resolution 2401 (2018), and provided expertise to ceasefire talks in Astana, which were not held under the United Nations umbrella.

20. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon promoted dialogue and international assistance in response to the political crisis in late 2017. Subsequently, under the auspices of the International Support Group for Lebanon, a road map for reform was advanced through three conferences in support of the economic and security sectors and the refugee situation. The United Nations further supported the conduct of parliamentary elections in May 2018, the first such polls since 2009.

21. The Office of my Special Envoy for Yemen promoted renewed impetus to the political process. In the context of recent intensification in the conflict, the Office presented to the Security Council in June 2018 elements of a negotiation framework that could allow for a resumption of negotiations. The Special Envoy has invited the Yemeni parties to peace talks in Geneva on 6 September.

22. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented a decrease of 9 per cent in the number of civilian casualties compared with 2016, but such casualties still stood at a total of 10,453 (3,438 deaths and 7,015 injured). Pursuant to its broad mandate under Security Council resolution 2344 (2017), UNAMA supported the Government of Afghanistan in its efforts to promote peace and implement its reform agenda. The Mission reported on the human rights situation, supported regional initiatives to enhance economic, political and security cooperation, and advocated for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security and subsequent resolutions. Moreover, UNAMA and the United Nations Development Programme, through the United Nations electoral support project, provided technical assistance to the Independent Electoral Commission and the Electoral Complaints Commission to prepare the ground for the 2018 parliamentary and district council elections.

23. The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) and the United Nations country team, together with multiple other actors, promoted the centrality of humanitarian concerns within military operations, especially during the Government's military campaign to retake territory from Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Following the referendum in the Kurdistan region and the disputed territories in Iraq in September 2017, which was subsequently ruled unconstitutional and cancelled by the Federal Supreme Court, UNAMI engaged extensively with the main stakeholders in Baghdad, Erbil, Kirkuk and Sulaymaniyah. The Mission promoted dialogue and confidence-building, thus helping to prevent further escalation with likely serious regional implications. In implementing this strategy, UNAMI worked closely with members of the Security Council and other interested Member States. UNAMI also engaged on a regular basis with government officials, parliamentarians, representatives of political parties, women's groups, civil society and religious and community leaders to foster inclusive political dialogue and national reconciliation towards a united, stable and peaceful Iraq, particularly after the victory over ISIL in December 2017.

24. A key aspect of the work of UNAMI during the reporting period was its support to the holding of parliamentary elections on 12 May 2018, including through the provision of advice, support and assistance to the election management bodies before and after the polls, in line with its mandate under Security Council resolution 2367 (2017). In the post-election phase, UNAMI is in close contact with numerous political leaders and actors, including women and minorities, to advocate inclusive non-sectarian dialogue and encourage the swift formation of a new national Government that will reflect the will of the people and ensure the representation of women at the highest levels in political and decision-making structures.

25. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/248, in April 2018 I appointed a Special Envoy on Myanmar. The Special Envoy undertook her introductory mission to the county in June 2018. The visit included travel to Rakhine State, where she pressed for conditions conducive to voluntary, safe and dignified returns of Rohingya refugees who had been uprooted from their homes and fled violence in Rakhine State. She also called for the implementation of the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

26. In Colombia, the peace process entered a new phase in September 2017, following the completion of the laying down of weapons and the subsequent transition of the Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejército del Pueblo (FARC-EP) guerrilla group into a political party, the Fuerza Alternativa Revolucionaria del Común (FARC). The United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, authorized by the Security Council in its resolution 2366 (2017), initiated its mandate on 26 September 2017 to verify the reintegration of former guerrilla members and the implementation of security guarantees for the FARC-EP and for conflict-affected communities. The Mission worked closely with the Government of Colombia, FARC and communities to build and sustain confidence in the peace process and foster progress in key issues related to its mandate. As part of these efforts, the Mission endeavoured to promote legal guarantees, unhindered political participation and productive projects for reintegrating former guerrilla members. The Mission also contributed to the verification of the bilateral ceasefire between the Government of Colombia and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional between October 2017 and January 2018.

27. During the reporting period, the negotiations, facilitated by the United Nations, between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders to reach a comprehensive settlement to the Cyprus issue remained at a hiatus, and direct contacts between the two sides, particularly at the level of the leaders of the two communities, were limited. The two leaders met once, on 16 April 2018, at a United Nations-facilitated informal meeting. In June 2018, I informed the Security Council of my intention to launch consultations with the sides and the guarantor powers through a senior United Nations official to hear the outcomes of the reflection which I had called for at the closing of the Conference on Cyprus in July 2017, and to help determine whether conditions have matured sufficiently at this stage for a meaningful process going forward. In the meantime, the Office of my Special Adviser on Cyprus continued its engagement with the leaders and other actors such as political parties and civil society organizations bilaterally. The Office also continued to facilitate the work of expert working groups and technical committees.

28. The Office of the United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions continued to work closely with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union on the situation in Georgia within the Geneva International Discussions, a unique framework that brings together the three organizations. In January 2018, following my call to revitalize ongoing mediation processes in Europe, the Co-chairs of the Geneva International Discussions launched consultations with all participants and relevant stakeholders to explore ways to further enhance the effectiveness of the process.

29. Turning to the work of the sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels and other entities and mechanisms, during the reporting period the Security Council adopted three resolutions (2371 (2017), 2375 (2017) and 2397 (2017)) concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which expanded the scope of existing sanctions measures; introduced new restrictions on certain economic activities, including new sectoral bans on goods, equipment and machinery, minerals and vessels; and mandated the Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to monitor compliance with those measures. In addition, the Secretary of the

Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006) was directed to monitor compliance by Member States with the restrictions concerning refined petroleum products.

30. With reference to the Panel of Experts on Libya, I reported to the Security Council on 11 May 2018 on the implementation of Security Council resolution 2292 (2016), as extended by resolution 2357 (2017), which authorized Member States to inspect, on the high seas off the coast of Libya, vessels bound for or from Libya, to ensure the strict implementation of the arms embargo (S/2018/451). I also submitted two reports to the Security Council (S/2017/1030 and S/2018/602) on the implementation of resolution 2231 (2015).

31. On 5 September 2017, the Security Council adopted resolution 2374 (2017), which imposed targeted sanctions, namely an assets freeze and a travel ban, on individuals and entities hindering the implementation of the 2015 Agreement on Peace and Reconciliation in Mali. The Council established a committee to monitor the implementation of these measures and requested me to create, for an initial period of 13 months, a group of up to five experts. I appointed a Panel of Experts on Mali comprising four experts on 12 December 2017 (S/2017/1047), constituting a new special political mission.

32. Separately, with regard to the sanctions regime in the Central African Republic, the Security Council adopted resolution 2399 (2018) on 30 January 2018, which broadened the sanctions designation criteria to cover attacks against humanitarian personnel and acts of incitement to violence, particularly on an ethnic or religious basis, that undermine the peace, stability or security of the Central African Republic. The Council also requested the Secretariat to provide benchmarks to assess the arms embargo measures based on option 3 in my letter dated 10 July 2017 (S/2017/597). In that connection, the Secretariat undertook an assessment visit to the Central African Republic in June 2018; its findings are reflected in my letter dated 31 July 2018 (S/2018/752).

33. On 23 August 2017, I submitted my third report (S/2017/715) to the Security Council on the progress made by Guinea-Bissau regarding the stabilization and restoration of constitutional order. I reiterated the recommendations in my previous report (S/2016/720) to continue the sanctions regime and establish a panel of experts to support the work of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 2048 (2012) concerning Guinea-Bissau. Subsequently, the Council adopted resolution 2404 (2018), in which it requested me to provide another report on this matter. Accordingly, the Department of Political Affairs of the Secretariat, in cooperation with UNIOGBIS, undertook an assessment between June and July, the results of which will be reflected in my fourth report to the Council to be submitted in August 2018.

34. On 21 September, the Security Council adopted resolution 2379 (2017), requesting the Secretary-General to establish an Investigative Team, headed by a Special Adviser, to support domestic efforts to hold ISIL (Da'esh) accountable by collecting, preserving and storing evidence in Iraq of acts that may amount to war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide committed by the terrorist group ISIL (Da'esh) in Iraq. On 31 May, I appointed a Special Adviser to head the Investigative Team.

III. Interactive dialogue with Member States

35. In its resolution 72/89, the General Assembly requested me to hold a regular, inclusive and interactive dialogue on the overall policy matters pertaining to special

political missions, and further requested the Secretariat to reach out to Member States prior to the holding of such a dialogue to ensure wide and meaningful participation.

36. Following consultations, the Department of Political Affairs organized the fifth annual interactive dialogue on special political missions on 9 July 2018. Following consultations with the Bureau of the Fourth Committee, it was decided that the theme of the dialogue would be conflict prevention.

37. In her opening remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs highlighted the critical role played by special political missions in conflict prevention, noting that their breadth, flexibility and nimbleness made them important tools in that area. She emphasized four policy issues that were critical to ensuring the success of special political missions, notably in their conflict prevention efforts: partnerships with other actors, particularly regional organizations; their role as a platform for the United Nations to address the regional dimensions of conflict; their contribution to strengthening local ownership of conflict prevention activities; and finally, the importance of a broader enabling environment, with close collaboration between the special political missions and other United Nations mechanisms and tools. She expressed her confidence that the ongoing reform and strengthening of the United Nations system, particularly the restructuring of the peace and security architecture, would support special political missions in better delivering on their mandates, while also integrating peacebuilding more closely into their work.

38. In his remarks, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support highlighted the ongoing support provided by his Department to special political missions, including the unique complexities in backstopping that had to be addressed while developing and delivering solutions for the field. He briefed on the Department's efforts to improve supply chain management, strengthen environmental management, foster technology and innovation, enhance measures to combat misconduct, and support field-oriented reform of business processes. He also reiterated his conviction that implementation of reforms, in both the management of the Secretariat and the peace and security architecture, would enable the Organization and its special political missions to better fulfil their mandates.

39. During the subsequent interactive exchange, 17 Member States took the floor to raise issues of relevance for special political missions. A number of speakers emphasized the importance of special political missions in preventing conflict, particularly through taking integrated and holistic approaches to their mandates. Several speakers noted the relationship between the work of the special political missions and elements of the broader United Nations agenda, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Many speakers stressed the importance of ensuring local ownership and close collaboration with Member States to ensure that special political missions delivered effectively in their efforts to prevent conflict and create sustainable peace. Several Member States reiterated the critical role played by regional organizations, in particular the African Union, and called on the United Nations to strengthen its support of and engagement with these partners.

40. Member States further stressed the need for special political missions to engage broadly and to prioritize inclusive approaches, particularly with regard to ensuring a gender perspective. The importance of women's political participation and their meaningful involvement in dialogue and peacemaking was highlighted, as was the need to actively engage young people. Delegates put forward concrete policy suggestions to achieve these goals, such as gender assessments and identifying youth focal points in each mission. Several Member States also spoke of their experiences in hosting special political missions and provided reflections on how to improve their work on the ground, better communicate their work to Member States and the role of the Secretariat in supporting them.

41. Many Member States emphasized that the ongoing process of United Nations reform and restructuring would improve the effectiveness of special political missions and better understanding around their work and reiterated their support for the reform efforts. In particular, the joint regional pillar to be created between the future Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Department of Peace Operations would ensure better support to special political missions from Headquarters, including in their conflict prevention efforts. Finally, several Member States continued to express concern over the funding challenges faced by special political missions and suggested that this issue be kept under discussion.

IV. Key policy issues pertaining to special political missions

Conflict prevention and sustaining peace

42. Since taking office and aware that the human and financial costs of crisis have become unsustainable, I have stressed my commitment to place prevention at the core of the work of the United Nations. I have, in particular, highlighted the importance of taking a holistic, coherent and coordinated approach across the entire system in support of prevention. I have also highlighted that the best way to prevent societies from descending into crisis is to ensure they are resilient through investment in inclusive and sustainable development, including concerted climate action and management of mass migration. The joint United Nations-World Bank study entitled *Pathways for Peace: Inclusive Approaches to Preventing Violent Conflict*, published in early 2018, demonstrated with empirical research that such prevention works, saves lives and is cost-effective, saving between $5 billion and $70 billion annually on responding to conflicts.

43. In January 2018, I submitted my report on peacebuilding and sustaining peace (A/72/707-S/2018/43) in follow-up to the twin resolutions on the review of the peacebuilding architecture adopted by the General Assembly (70/262) and the Security Council (2282 (2016)). The report emphasizes that the meaningful participation of women in peace and prevention efforts strengthens the effectiveness of peacebuilding and the direct relation between gender equality, peace and resilience. At the Assembly high-level meeting on peacebuilding and sustaining peace, held from 24 to 26 April 2018, Member States further reiterated their support for a comprehensive approach to prevention and adopted two parallel resolutions in the Assembly and the Council (72/276 and 2413 (2018) respectively). In these resolutions and their continuing discussions, Member States have reiterated their commitment to supporting the work of the United Nations to prevent the outbreak, escalation, continuation and recurrence of conflict. These commitments have reinforced the importance of the United Nations working along the conflict cycle and employing an array of tools, including special political missions. In this context, Member States have recognized the important role of the special political mission as a flexible tool for the maintenance of international peace and security, including through contributing to a comprehensive approach to peacebuilding and sustaining peace (resolution 72/89).

Regional partnerships and the work of the regional political offices

44. Robust and sustainable partnerships, particularly with regional and subregional organizations, are fundamental to ensuring the success of special political missions. As illustrated in section II above on key operational developments, much of the work undertaken by special political missions is in close collaboration with and in support of regional partners.

45. The three regional political offices play a particularly important role in forging closer working relations with partners across a range of peace and security issues of common interest. UNOWAS continued to support efforts aimed at preventing conflict and sustaining peace in the region in collaboration with regional and international partners, including by promoting and supporting inclusive national political dialogues and peaceful electoral processes. On 25 and 26 July 2017, UNOWAS conducted a workshop in Conakry to identify lessons learned from previous elections in West Africa and to identify priorities for electoral processes going forward. More than 50 representatives of electoral management bodies and other stakeholders from the region exchanged views on how to enhance the quality of electoral processes. Participants emphasized the need for inclusive political dialogue, the promotion of credible electoral management bodies and the establishment of reliable civil registries to permit the regular updating of electoral registers.

46. On 26 and 27 March 2018, UNOWAS organized a colloquium in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, on the theme "Challenges and prospects of political reforms in West Africa", attended by approximately 70 representatives of national institutions spearheading political reforms. The colloquium resulted in the creation of a platform for political reforms in West Africa and the Sahel, the secretariat of which will be hosted by UNOWAS. UNOWAS also supported the Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the development of a regional action plan on transhumance and established an informal working group on pastoralism and conflict prevention with the participation of the United Nations and regional entities working on this issue.

47. During the reporting period, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) strengthened cooperation in conflict prevention and early warning, including by conducting more joint analysis and visits to countries in the region and by promoting common messaging. From 15 to 18 March 2018, my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of UNOCA and the Secretary-General of ECCAS undertook a joint mission to the Central African Republic to reiterate the support of both organizations to the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation. UNOCA organized a youth forum on radicalization from 30 November to 2 December 2017 in Libreville, in cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Organization of la Francophonie and ECCAS, with a view to creating a targeted early warning system on this issue. On 24 May 2018, following a workshop co-organized by ECCAS and UNOCA in Brazzaville, participants validated the regional action plan for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security in Central Africa. UNOCA and UNOWAS, together with ECCAS, facilitated an experience-sharing session on conflict prevention and pastoralism on 11 and 12 April 2018. The Heads of UNOCA and UNOWAS both attended the joint summit of ECOWAS and ECCAS Heads of State and Government on peace, security, stability and the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, which was held on 30 July 2018 in Lomé. UNOCA has also partnered with the African Union and continued to coordinate efforts to address the threat posed by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), including through coordination meetings and joint missions to LRA-affected countries.

48. The United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia has been working to encourage the positive dynamics that emerged in the Central Asian region in 2017, including by supporting Central Asian countries in their efforts to arrive at regional solutions to cross-border threats and challenges.

49. In April 2018, the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia and the Office of Counter-Terrorism of the Secretariat launched the third phase of their joint project for implementing the United Nations Global Counter-

Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia, the first regional approach of this kind. The aim of this phase is to pursue regional cooperation while fostering national ownership. The Regional Centre also supports regional dialogue on shared water and energy resources and environmental degradation and maintains close cooperation with the International Fund for Saving the Aral Sea. In its approach, the Regional Centre prioritizes building national capacities for prevention, including on water diplomacy, and building partnerships with a range of United Nations entities, as well as international and regional organizations. As Central Asian countries increasingly prioritize engagement with Afghanistan as an important partner, particularly with regard to economic development and trade, the Regional Centre, working closely with UNAMA, has been supporting the strengthening of relationships between countries in the region.

50. During the reporting period, significant progress was achieved in deepening the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union on conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and peacebuilding, as well as development. The United Nations Office to the African Union continued to work closely with the African Union to strengthen collaboration and unity of action. The Security Council and the Peace and Security Council of the African Union made progress in enhancing collaboration on peace and security issues in Africa, holding their eleventh and twelfth joint consultative meetings on 8 September 2017 in Addis Ababa and on 19 July 2018 in New York, respectively. I welcomed the recognition, expressed by both councils, of the importance of the strategic partnership between the two organizations.

51. In keeping with the enhanced and mutually reinforcing partnership between the United Nations and the African Union, and to further accelerate the implementation of the sustainable development agenda for Africa, in January 2018 I signed, with the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, the African Union-United Nations Framework for the Implementation of Agenda 2063 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This follows the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security, which was signed in April 2017. These frameworks will guide stronger cooperation, coordination and mainstreaming in the work of our organizations.

52. African Union member States also made substantial contributions to the Peace Fund, which provides financial support to African Union-led peace support operations, and took steps towards the operationalization of the mechanism with the adoption of the instrument relating to the enhanced governance and management structure of the Peace Fund. Since 2016, the Secretariat of the United Nations and the African Union Commission have strengthened their efforts towards sustainable, predictable and flexible funding mechanisms for African peace support operations authorized by the Security Council. Further to Council resolution 2320 (2016), I proposed funding options in my report contained in document S/2017/454, which were subsequently echoed in a report of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission on 30 May 2017 as a viable basis for progress on this issue. Work on priority areas also continues under Security Council resolution 2378 (2017), which expressed the Council's intention to further consider practical steps and conditions necessary to partly finance African Union-led peace support operations through assessed contributions, on a case-by-case basis.

53. I am strongly committed to strengthening the Organization's partnerships with regional and other organizations in the maintenance of international peace and security, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. To this end, I convened a high-level interactive dialogue with regional and other organizations in New York on 12 and 13 June 2018. High-level representatives from 19 regional and other organizations active in the area of international peace and security participated. Participants had a frank and productive exchange of views on

global challenges related to peace and security from the prevention perspective. We identified concrete actions to reinforce our cooperation and coordination, particularly in the field.

Ensuring an inclusive approach to peace

54. The United Nations takes a broad and inclusive approach to peacebuilding, peacemaking and sustaining peace. During the reporting period, special political missions continued to mainstream this approach in all their efforts, particularly in terms of prioritizing engagement and inclusion of actors who might otherwise be marginalized or excluded from decision-making, peacemaking, peacebuilding or conflict-resolution efforts.

55. UNSOM conducted a working session in December 2017 for 18 women members of the Federal Parliament as part of its joint efforts with UN-Women and the United Nations country team to strengthen the capacities of women parliamentarians. The working sessions included the elected executives of the Somali women's caucus and provided an opportunity for open discussions among members of parliament on various issues, including their role as legislators and advocates of women's political empowerment. Participants identified a set of priority areas, including reconciliation, one-person-one-vote universal elections in 2020, constitutional review and further capacity-building.

56. The gender working group composed of representatives of the Government of Colombia, FARC-EP and the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia has continued to mainstream gender considerations in the verification of aspects of the peace agreement between the Government of Colombia and FARC-EP. The working group consists of gender focal points designated by the three members, which also nominated gender focal points at the regional and local levels. This tripartite gender group has been referred to by the parties as a best practice that allowed them to reinforce their work and dialogue around gender-related issues and the role of women in the peace process, including the specific needs of women ex-combatants.

57. In 2017, more than 50 representatives of women-led civil society groups and umbrella organizations came together under the auspices of UNIOGBIS to form an inclusive women's forum for peace in Guinea-Bissau. The forum aims to help end the political impasse and encourage a resumption of dialogue between the President and the majority and opposition parties. It appointed 10 influential women to assist in opening space for dialogue among political actors and parties; it presented a report of their work to the President of the Republic, the signatories of the Conakry Agreement on the Implementation of the Economic Community of West African States Road Map for the Resolution of the Political Crisis in Guinea-Bissau and international stakeholders in August 2017. This facilitation process helped to reduce tensions in the country and forestall a possible return to violence. The forum also facilitated the establishment of a communication channel between State institutions and the parties to the conflict, which proved instrumental in the appointment of a new Prime Minister in April 2018.

58. The Syrian Women's Advisory Board to my Special Envoy for Syria has continued to work to ensure that gender perspectives are considered throughout the political process. Since 2017, the Office of my Special Envoy has been systematically tracking the number of women in the delegations participating in the intra-Syrian talks and their substantive roles, the gender dynamics in the talks and how implementation of the women and peace and security agenda is advanced. The Special Envoy has also expressed his intention to reserve for women 30 per cent of the seats on a constitutional committee to be formed under United Nations auspices in Geneva in line with Security Council resolution 2254 (2015).

59. The United Nations also recognizes the important and positive role that young people play in the maintenance and promotion of international peace and security, as acknowledged by the Security Council in resolutions 2250 (2015) and 2419 (2018) on youth and peace and security. Special political missions continue to engage actively with youth and young people in different aspects of their work, including in mediation, peace and reconciliation processes, and political participation more broadly. For instance, UNSOM has worked with various local, regional and international actors to ensure the participation of young people in national peace processes. Overall, I have reiterated that young people are a missing piece in the United Nations broader efforts to make and sustain peace. I will continue to emphasize the need to ensure their full and active engagement in the work of the United Nations.

Safety and security

60. Many special political missions, in bearing mandates centred around complex peace processes, operate in highly volatile and challenging security environments. In some cases, these environments are characterized by ongoing and high-intensity military conflicts, insurgency, social unrest or terrorist activity.

61. United Nations personnel who are based, operate or deployed in mission environments such as Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic or Yemen face a considerable risk of becoming collateral victims, or being directly targeted. These circumstances directly challenge the Organization's ability to stay and deliver on its mandates and must therefore be factored into the overall posture of special political missions, requiring continuous attention and proactive measures. While the United Nations relies primarily on host Governments to guarantee the security of mission personnel, in some contexts they have insufficient capacity to deliver security services. The Department of Political Affairs and the leadership of special political missions engage continuously with the Department of Safety and Security of the Secretariat to review risk management strategies so as to adapt and minimize any possible impact on mandate delivery for all missions, including panels or groups of experts supporting Security Council committees.

62. Special political missions, in many instances, have thus had to maintain significant security mitigation measures, identified and enhanced through a continuous risk management process. Examples of such measures include the deployment of United Nations armed civilian security personnel, increased cooperation with regional partners that deploy military personnel on the ground, the deployment of guard units provided by Member States, and the employment of private security companies, where appropriate and in accordance with relevant General Assembly resolutions.

Geographical distribution and gender representation

63. I remain committed to improving the representation of women throughout the Organization, including in field-based special political missions. As at June 2018, 31.8 per cent of internationally recruited staff serving in the missions were women, a slight decrease of 1 per cent over the previous year. Among locally recruited staff in those missions, about 16 per cent were women, a slight improvement of 1 per cent over the previous year. These numbers indicate that more work needs to be done. My system-wide strategy on gender parity, which I launched in September 2017, will be a critical part of United Nations efforts to improve the number of women serving at all levels, with the goal of reaching full gender parity in the Organization by 2028.

64. I am similarly convinced that we must continue to promote and improve geographical diversity in the United Nations. As at June 2018, the distribution of the

1,398 internationally recruited staff serving in the field-based special political missions was as follows: 22.8 per cent from the African Group, 22.7 per cent from the Asia-Pacific Group, 12.7 per cent from the Eastern European Group, 7.6 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group and 34.3 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States. Of the 2,093 locally recruited staff, 13.4 per cent were from the African Group, 79.6 per cent from the Asia-Pacific Group, 0.1 per cent from the Eastern European Group, 5.3 per cent from the Latin American and Caribbean Group and 1.7 per cent from the Group of Western European and other States.

V. Observations

65. In the present report, I have emphasized the importance that I continue to attach to special political missions, particularly in the Organization's ongoing effort to place prevention at the centre of its work. I am confident that Member States will continue to value the critical contribution of special political missions to conflict prevention, resolution and sustaining peace.

66. Special political missions must remain flexible, nimble and able to respond and adapt rapidly to changing circumstances. Inclusive, broad-based and integrated approaches to addressing security, development and humanitarian challenges will increasingly be needed. I will continue to advocate for these across our work, but particularly in regions such as the Sahel and the Great Lakes.

67. I am confident that the ongoing reform efforts within the United Nations, which are due to come into effect on 1 January 2019, will help to strengthen the ability of special political missions to deliver on their mandates, while also sharpening their focus on peacebuilding and sustaining peace. As I noted in my original proposal on the restructuring of the United Nations peace and security pillar (A/72/525), the reform seeks to prioritize conflict prevention and sustaining peace and to enhance the effectiveness and coherence of peacekeeping operations and special political missions. In particular, the new single, regional political-operational structure that will be shared between the future Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Department of Peace Operations will be instrumental in better supporting the work of special political missions, including by ensuring coordination, synergy and coherence with United Nations peacekeeping missions that are working in the same region or have intersecting and/or complementary mandates. With regard to the unresolved question of funding and backstopping arrangements for special political missions, on which the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions made recommendations in 2011 that were later reiterated in the reports of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and the Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture, it is my hope that Member States will provide guidance.

68. The outcomes of management reform, including strengthened client orientation, simplification of human resources policies and practices as well as decentralization and delegation of authority and decision-making closer to the point of delivery, will be a further important factor in ensuring the enhanced accountability and effectiveness of special political missions. The repositioning of the United Nations development system, particularly the creation of a newly empowered and more impartial resident coordinator system, will also help to strengthen the United Nations presence on the ground, which will enable greater coordination with the work of the special political missions.

69. As noted throughout the present report, partnerships with other international and regional stakeholders, particularly regional and subregional organizations, are critical

to the effectiveness of the special political missions. In this regard, I look forward to further efforts to implement the Joint United Nations-African Union Framework for Enhanced Partnership in Peace and Security and to working closely with the African Union, as with other regional and subregional organizations and Member States, to help advance conflict prevention and sustaining peace in Africa, and elsewhere.

Annex

United Nations special political missions (as at 1 August 2018)

Special and personal envoys, advisers and representatives of the Secretary-General

1. Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Cyprus
2. Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide
3. Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara
4. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004)
5. United Nations Representative to the Geneva International Discussions
6. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria
7. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Sudan and South Sudan
8. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region
9. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Yemen
10. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Burundi
11. Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Myanmar

Sanctions monitoring teams, groups and panels and other entities and mechanisms

12. Monitoring Group on Somalia and Eritrea
13. Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo
14. Panel of Experts on the Sudan
15. Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea
16. Panel of Experts on Libya
17. Panel of Experts on the Central African Republic
18. Panel of Experts on Yemen
19. Panel of Experts on South Sudan
20. Panel of Experts on Mali
21. Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1526 (2004) and 2253 (2015) concerning Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) (Da'esh), Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities
22. Implementation of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015)
23. Support for the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004)
24. Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate
25. Investigative Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 2379 (2017)

Regional offices, offices in support of political processes and other missions

26. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon
27. Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process
28. United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
29. United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq
30. United Nations Assistance Mission in Somalia
31. United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau
32. United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa
33. United Nations Office for West Africa and the Sahel
34. United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia
35. United Nations Office to the African Union
36. United Nations support team to the Cameroon-Nigeria Mixed Commission
37. United Nations Support Mission in Libya
38. United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia

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Seventy-third session
Item 54 of the provisional agenda*
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

Persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

In its resolution 72/81, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, after consulting the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, to report on progress made with regard to the implementation of the resolution, which relates to persons displaced as a result of the June 1967 and subsequent hostilities.

The present report pertains to correspondence between the Secretary-General and the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations regarding action taken by the Government of Israel in implementing the relevant provisions of the resolution. It also presents information made available by the Commissioner-General to the Secretary-General on the return of refugees registered with the Agency to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip from Jordan, Lebanon and the Syrian Arab Republic.

* A/73/150.

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Please recycle

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to resolution 72/81, by which the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, after consulting with the Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), to report on the progress made with regard to the implementation of the resolution.

2. On 4 May 2018, the Secretary-General addressed a note verbale to the Permanent Representatives of Member States, including the Permanent Representative of Israel, and to the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine, in which he drew attention to his reporting responsibility under resolutions 72/81 and 72/83 and requested them to inform him of any action that their Governments had taken or envisaged taking concerning the implementation of the relevant provisions of the resolutions.

3. In a note verbale dated 12 July, the Permanent Mission of Israel replied as follows:

> The Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations has the honour to refer to the note concerning resolutions 72/80 to 72/83 adopted by the General Assembly on 7 December 2017 under the agenda item entitled "United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East".
>
> Israel decided, once again, to vote against these resolutions, owing to the political motivation that stands behind them and the fact that they represent a one-sided view that fails to reflect the reality on the ground.
>
> The Permanent Mission would like to emphasize Israel's underlying position regarding UNRWA, as was envisaged by Prime Minister Netanyahu at the start of the Israeli Cabinet meeting held on 7 January 2018: "UNRWA is an organization that perpetuates the Palestinian refugee problem. It also perpetuates the narrative to the right of return, as it were, in order to eliminate the State of Israel; therefore, UNRWA needs to pass from the world. This is an agency that was established 70 years ago, only for the Palestinian refugees, at a time when the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) dealt with global refugee problems. Of course, this has created a situation in which there are great-grandchildren of refugees, who are not refugees but who are cared for by UNRWA, and another 70 years will pass and those great-grandchildren will have great-grandchildren, and, therefore, this absurdity needs to stop."
>
> The Prime Minister also outlined the way forward: "UNRWA support funds need to be gradually shifted to UNHCR, with clear criteria for supporting genuine refugees, not fictitious refugees as is happening today under UNRWA. I have brought this position to the attention of the United States. This is how to rid the world of UNRWA and deal with genuine refugee problems, to the extent that such remain."
>
> Prime Minister Netanyahu's remarks touch upon the fundamental issue of the UNRWA definition of refugees, which goes far beyond the accepted international definitions of and criteria for refugees. Rather than narrowing the problem in order to solve it, this flexible definition has widened it, with refugee status now applying to the fourth generation of Palestinians, dramatically increasing the number of registered refugees from an estimated 700,000 in 1949 (according to UNRWA) to more than 5,000,000.
>
> By perpetuating the refugee status of Palestinians, instead of finding durable solutions to eliminate their status, UNRWA demonstrates that it is part of the problem and not part of the solution. Moreover, the perpetuation of their refugee status and the Palestinian "refugee" narrative amount to support of only one

solution — the return of 5 million Palestinians to Israeli territory, an objective that Israel rejects categorically because it undermines the prospects of reaching a peace agreement for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and threatens Israel's character as the world's only Jewish State.

Israel remains deeply concerned regarding the Agency's persistent and cynical use of humanitarian funding for the purpose of advocacy, which runs contrary to the efforts being made to achieve a political solution. It is unacceptable for a United Nations agency to actively support a biased narrative about the conflict in the region, while utilizing the refugee situation as the primary means of achieving this goal. UNRWA should stick to its original humanitarian mandate while refraining from one-sided politicized advocacy.

Another grave concern arose during the past year as UNRWA spokesperson, Gunness, admitted, once again, (in October 2017) that UNRWA had exposed a tunnel under one of its schools in Gaza. This was the second tunnel that UNRWA had discovered in the past couple of months. According to the announcement: "UNRWA robustly intervened with relevant parties to protest the violation of the sanctity and disrespect of the neutrality of United Nations premises. The presence of a tunnel underneath an UNRWA installation ... is unacceptable. It places children and Agency staff at risk. The Agency again demands full respect for the neutrality and inviolability of United Nations premises at all times."

The discovery of a second terror tunnel, operating directly under the classrooms of children, is not an isolated incident, but rather part of Hamas' systematic effort to exploit the organs of the United Nations. However, UNRWA deliberately chooses to omit any direct mention of Hamas' responsibility and of its common practice to misuse United Nations and civilian infrastructure. It is of utmost importance to ensure that all United Nations-affiliated agencies, and especially UNRWA, remain neutral and safeguarded from abuse by terrorist organizations.

Furthermore, in the past months, Israel has faced a series of provocative, premeditated mass confrontations along the security fence between the Gaza Strip and Israel. The Palestinian leadership insisted that these demonstrations were peaceful. However, the riots have centred on violence and placed innocent people, both Israeli and Palestinian, in grave danger. Hamas terrorists, hiding behind women and children being exploited as human shields, have burned tyres on the fence, thrown Molotov cocktails, planted explosive devices and even attempted to forcibly breach the fence and infiltrate Israeli territory. Twice, extremely violent Palestinian rioters penetrated the Palestinian side of the Kerem Shalom crossing, causing major damage to the fuel terminal and conveyor and thus harming the sole lifeline of the Gaza Strip. Not only that, but protesters keep sending flaming kites over the fence on a daily basis, spreading forest fires across Israel's southern agricultural lands, threatening human lives, causing severe environmental damage and creating a heavy economic toll.

Despite the reality on the ground, we have seen time and time again the public statements and tweets of UNRWA exempting Hamas of its responsibility and lacking condemnation of the main role of Hamas in those events. Moreover, UNRWA policies only encourage Hamas to keep using civilians, including UNRWA students, for the sole purpose of inciting violence and thus distracting the world from Hamas' decade-long control of the Gaza Strip and its detrimental impact on the deteriorating humanitarian crisis in the area. As we have seen in the past months, especially regarding the riots on the Gaza border, the public statements of UNWRA clearly indicate its growing leniency towards advocacy in the service of Hamas, rather than focusing on relief and humanitarian

assistance in the best interest of the Palestinian people in Gaza. By doing so, UNRWA only exacerbates the unnecessary human suffering of innocent Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Despite the acute security threats, Israel is actively working to support reconstruction efforts in the Gaza Strip. Since October 2014, the United Nations-backed Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism has enabled the entrance of over 10.33 million tons of various types of construction materials into the Gaza Strip, 3.28 million tons during 2017 alone. As of December 2017, 127,187 out of a total of 130,000 damaged housing units were renovated. More than 19,262 new housing units are in advanced stages of construction, while hundreds are ready for occupancy. Hundreds of public projects, including schools, clinics, mosques and parks, have been completed or are near completion. Delays in reconstruction stem predominantly from the actions of Hamas and its conflict with the Palestinian Authority, including the Palestinian Authority's decision to keep suspending payments for salaries in Gaza, and a lack of international funding for the Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism. It is important to note that Israel is committed to enabling the delivery of humanitarian assistance and continues to provide electrical power and water, as well as enable the entry of goods, for the people of Gaza.

In conclusion, Israel would like to re-emphasize Prime Minister Netanyahu's stance regarding UNRWA, which calls for a gradual shifting of UNRWA support funds to UNHCR, while defining clear criteria as to who is a "genuine refugee" and who is a "fictitious refugee". However, until this vision is put into practice, UNRWA and its workers must keep high standards of impartiality, as expected from all United Nations employees. UNRWA must return to its original mandate as a relief and humanitarian agency, instead of distorting facts and presenting them in one-sided reports and statements that only heighten tensions between the parties.

4. In connection with paragraph 5 of resolution 72/81, the Secretary-General has obtained from the Commissioner-General of UNRWA the information available to him on the return of refugees registered with the Agency to the occupied Palestinian territory. As indicated in previous reports on the subject, UNRWA is not involved in any arrangements for the return of refugees, nor is it involved in any arrangements for the return of displaced persons who are not registered as refugees. Its information is based on requests by registered refugees for the transfer of their UNRWA registration records from Jordan, Lebanon or the Syrian Arab Republic to the occupied Palestinian territory. The Agency would not necessarily be aware of the return of any registered refugees to the occupied Palestinian territory who did not request the transfer of their registration records. So far as is known to the Agency, from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018, 230 refugees registered with UNRWA returned to the West Bank and 218 to the Gaza Strip from places outside the occupied Palestinian territory. It should be noted that some of those may not have been displaced in 1967, but may have been displaced in earlier or later years or may be members of the family of a displaced registered refugee. Thus, taking into account the estimate given in paragraph 4 of the previous report (A/72/313), the number of displaced registered refugees who are known by the Agency to have returned to the occupied Palestinian territory since June 1967 is 37,541. UNRWA is unable to estimate the total number of displaced inhabitants who have returned. It keeps records only of registered refugees and other registered persons[1] and, as noted above, even those records, in particular

[1] "Other registered persons" refers to those who, at the time of original registration, did not satisfy all the Agency's criteria for "Palestine refugee", but who were determined to have suffered significant loss and/or hardship for reasons relating to the 1948 conflict in Palestine; it also includes persons who belong to the families of other registered persons.

with regard to the location of registered refugees and other registered persons, may be incomplete.

5. In connection with paragraph 3 of resolution 72/81, the Secretary-General refers to the report of the Commissioner-General of UNRWA for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2017 (A/73/13) and to the previous reports of the Commissioner-General for accounts of the ongoing assistance provided by UNRWA to persons displaced and in need of continued assistance.

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Seventy-third session
Item 117 (d) of the provisional agenda*
Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 22 August 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

The Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations presents its compliments to the President of the General Assembly and has the honour to refer to the candidature of Austria to the Human Rights Council for the period 2019–2021 for the elections to be held during the seventy-third session.

In accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, the Permanent Mission has the further honour to transmit herewith the voluntary pledges and commitments reaffirming that the promotion and protection of all human rights are a core priority of the foreign policy of Austria (see annex).

The Permanent Mission would be grateful if the present note and its annex could be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under item 117 (d) of the provisional agenda.

* A/73/150.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 22 August 2018 from the Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations addressed to the President of the General Assembly

Candidature of Austria to the Human Rights Council, 2019–2021

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

I. Building bridges for human rights

1. Austria is entirely committed to the full respect of human rights at the national and international levels. Austrian policies are guided by the conviction that human rights are universal, indivisible, interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Austria is convinced that the promotion and protection of all human rights worldwide must be facilitated through partnership and dialogue with all relevant actors. The greatest challenges of our time — ranging from the protection of media freedom to the management of large movements of refugees and migrants — can be overcome only through effective multilateral mechanisms based on full respect for international law and in cooperation with the international human rights system.

2. Austria has long been committed to developing and strengthening international human rights protection within the United Nations framework. The activities of Austria within the international community have always been centred around its political neutrality and its extensive tradition of building bridges across cultural, ethnic, ideological and religious boundaries. In this spirit, Austria hosted the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, as well as several follow-up events. During its chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in 2017, Austria focused on the fight against radicalization and extremism, addressing crucial aspects such as freedom of religion and assembly, freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, gender equality, the protection of minorities, tackling hate speech and cybersecurity, with a view to advancing the discussion on these issues. Furthermore, Austria proactively contributed to the promotion of human rights within the United Nations as Chair of the Commission for Social Development at its fifty-fifth session and as Chair of the Committee on Information in 2017, as well as in its role as facilitator of the negotiations for the political declaration of the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

3. The Human Rights Council plays a leading role in developing and strengthening human rights protection worldwide. In that regard, Austria has decided to announce its candidature to the Council for the period 2019–2021. Austria is proud to declare that it has essentially implemented the pledges and commitments related to its candidature to the Council for the period 2011–2014. With a view to making the selection of members of the Council as transparent as possible, and in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/251, Austria presents its new pledges and commitments below.

II. International cooperation

4. Austria is committed to open, transparent and cross-regional international cooperation and will continue to serve as a place of dialogue and cooperation for the promotion of human rights.

5. Austria has repeatedly demonstrated its dedication to the international human rights system and was a member of the Council for the first time from 2011 to 2014.

With its renewed membership of the Council, Austria will intensify its commitment and contribute to the full implementation of the mandate of the Council. Austria reaffirms its goal of rendering the work of the Council more effective and supports efforts to further strengthen the Council in a transparent manner and in collaboration with all Member States.

6. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993 continue to be of immense importance for international human rights protection and served as a basis for the creation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Austria remains determined in its support of an independent OHCHR and will continue and intensify its ongoing engagement with and support for that Office.

7. Austria fully cooperates with all international and regional human rights monitoring mechanisms and fulfils its periodic reporting obligations. It has extended a general invitation to all special rapporteurs and other human rights mechanisms to visit Austria and will continue to support their vital work and the work of the human rights treaty bodies. Austria places great emphasis on the universal periodic review. It is currently implementing the recommendations adopted during the second cycle of the universal periodic review and will provide the Council with an interim report thereon. The report for the third cycle of the universal periodic review, just as with previous reviews, will be prepared in a transparent procedure with the involvement of civil society.

8. In line with its long-standing tradition, Austria will continue to build bridges to develop and strengthen the international regime for the protection of human rights at the United Nations and other organizations. It will use its experience to openly and transparently promote cross-regional cooperation and to contribute to the understanding of the shared responsibility of Council members to develop and strengthen international human rights protection. Recognizing the significant contribution of civil society to the promotion of human rights and to the work of the human rights system of the United Nations, Austria will maintain its cooperation with and support for civil society at the national and international levels. To that effect, Austria will also continue to clearly oppose reprisals against human rights defenders.

9. First and foremost, Austria will remain committed to its current human rights priorities. At the Council and the General Assembly, Austria will continue to actively support initiatives to promote the rights of minorities, freedom of speech and the safety of journalists, the human rights of internally displaced persons and human rights in the administration of justice. Austria is determined to intensify cross-regional cooperation to further pursue these initiatives.

10. Austria will continue its cooperation to strengthen the rights of women, children and persons with disabilities, the rule of law and the promotion of human rights education, and to fight against trafficking in persons, racism and discrimination. In addition, the global abolition of the death penalty remains a priority of Austrian foreign policy.

11. One of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies. This goal is at the heart of Austrian development cooperation, through which Austria supports its partners in Africa, Asia, Latin America and South-Eastern and Eastern Europe in their sustainable social, economic and democratic development and in strengthening the rule of law. Austrian development cooperation is devoted to a human rights-based approach, which is implemented as a guiding principle in its international programmes and projects as well as in political dialogue, with a focus on humanitarian aid, the fight against poverty, cooperation in the area of migration, gender equality, and the rights of the child and of persons with disabilities. This is reflected through specific programmes

and projects for bilateral cooperation, as well as in the support for institutions such as OHCHR, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Austria will continue to further strengthen these efforts.

12. At the United Nations and in regional organizations, such as the Council of Europe and OSCE, the human rights policy of Austria is founded on the principles of partnership, objectivity and pluralism. The efforts of Austria are centred around dialogue with all stakeholders and aimed at partnership-based solutions to problems, with a view to overcoming differences, improving the protection of human rights worldwide and promoting positive change in people's lives. Within the European Union, Austria advocates a consistent human rights policy within and outside the Union.

13. Austria has a long and successful tradition of intercultural and interreligious dialogue. In dialogue activities, great emphasis is placed on strengthening the role of women and the inclusion of young people. Highest priority is given to issues of social, cultural and religious pluralism, democracy-building and respect for human rights, including freedom of religion. Austria will continue to intensify its efforts to promote intercultural dialogue and freedom of religion.

III. Commitment of Austria to the protection of human rights

14. Austria is committed to promoting a human rights policy that ensures the respect, protection and fulfilment of human rights at the national level also. It has ratified and implemented all major international human rights treaties. In Austria, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms holds the status of constitutional law, and the actions of the State, its courts and its administrative authorities are directly guided by the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. Furthermore, the rights guaranteed under the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union are used to evaluate Austria on the issue of human rights within the scope of European Union law.

15. Ensuring and protecting human rights is also understood by Austria as a dynamic process that, owing to an ever-changing level of social awareness, must be constantly developed. The framework conditions created for the integration of refugees and migrants will be further improved through, among other things, support and advice, including on fundamental and human rights. At the national level, Austria intends, inter alia, to take measures to expand the legal protection of children. In implementing Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)5 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to member States, the Government has commissioned independent experts to engage with various stakeholder groups and review the country's record on safeguarding Internet freedom. The national action plan on disability covering the period from 2012 to 2020 is being evaluated and may be extended until 2030 based on the results of the evaluation.

16. In revising its code of conduct for the prevention of corruption and developing a national action plan based on its national anti-corruption strategy, Austria will adapt and expand measures to prevent and combat corruption to comply with current standards.

17. In Austria, the courts, in particular the Constitutional Court, ensure that constitutional rights are respected. The role of the Constitutional Court will be further strengthened through the introduction of a mandatory preliminary ruling procedure

that must be followed before the holding of binding referendums, under the conditions set out in the government programme to ensure compliance with fundamental rights as well as international and European Union law. The Government is also committed to a further concretization of the rights arising from the constitutional guarantee to a fair trial. In addition, several independent supervisory bodies monitor the implementation of and respect for human rights at the national level.

18. The Austrian Ombudsman Board is the country's national human rights institution. It addresses grievances against administrative bodies, including alleged human rights violations. Since 2012, it has also undertaken preventative activities in relation to detention facilities, along with its six independent commissions. In Parliament, a committee on human rights routinely addresses current human rights issues. Austria will evaluate and further develop its national security authorities in accordance with international models. Legal protection will be developed to the highest standards following the structural model of the Board.

19. Austria places particular emphasis on the involvement of civil society in the promotion of human rights. Consequently, the Government and the authorities are engaged in continuous dialogue with civil society and they value the engagement and technical expertise demonstrated by many civil society organizations, which contribute substantially to the relevance of the work carried out by national and international human rights mechanisms.

20. In cooperation with national and international stakeholders, the Austrian national contact point for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises will continue to pursue its activities in a proactive manner and with a strengthened focus on human rights, and it will continue to play a key role as a platform for dialogue and arbitration in respect of human rights issues related to the cross-border activities of Austrian companies.

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Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, questions relating to refugees, returnees and displaced persons and humanitarian questions

Assistance to refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa**

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/152. It provides an update of information contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted to the Assembly at its seventy-second session (A/72/354) and covers the period from 1 July 2017 to 30 June 2018. The report has been coordinated by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and includes information provided by the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the United Nations Population Fund, the World Food Programme and the World Health Organization. It also includes information drawn from the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre.

* A/73/150.

** The submission of the present report was delayed owing to the need for input from the Secretariat.

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I. Introduction

1. Africa[1] continues to host large numbers of refugees, internally displaced persons, stateless persons and others affected by conflict, persecution and generalized violence, and numerous emergencies afflict the continent. The crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo was of particular concern, with localized unrest triggering the internal displacement of 2.16 million people, bringing the total number of internally displaced persons in the country to 4.5 million and sending tens of thousands more across borders. The conflict in South Sudan continued to deteriorate and, by the end of 2017, had displaced more than one third of the citizens of South Sudan. In the Central African Republic, violent clashes among armed groups and intercommunal tensions increased sharply, and conflict spread to parts of the country that had previously been unaffected. While some countries were plagued by new emergencies, others endured protracted crises and displacement situations.

2. By the end of 2017, the number of persons of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)[2] in Africa reached 24.2 million, up from 19.6 million in 2016. That included 6.3 million refugees, up from 5.1 million, and 14.5 million internally displaced persons, up from 11.1 million. The region also hosted 509,000 asylum seekers and 712,000 stateless persons.[3] The majority of the refugees came from South Sudan (2.4 million), Somalia (986,400), the Sudan (694,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (620,800), the Central African Republic (545,500), Eritrea (486,200) and Burundi (439,300). Uganda was the largest host country on the continent, providing protection and assistance to 1.4 million refugees, an increase of 44 per cent compared with 2016. The Sudan and Ethiopia were the second- and the third-largest host countries, with 906,600 and 889,400 refugees, respectively.

3. Compounding these complex emergencies were an array of protection challenges, including trafficking and forced recruitment. Sexual and gender-based violence, which affects women and girls disproportionately, remained prevalent, exposing them to risks and vulnerabilities, which are exacerbated by displacement. Meanwhile, drought, insecurity, conflict and a lack of access led to food insecurity for both refugees and host communities and brought some areas to the brink of famine while also testing the ability of humanitarian organizations to respond to emergencies and deliver assistance.

4. Mixed movements of refugees and migrants from East Africa and the Horn of Africa, and from West Africa, through the central Mediterranean route towards Europe, as well as from the Great Lakes region towards South Africa, continued to affect the region. Promoting a favourable protection environment for people on the move, including advocating access to territory and fair asylum procedures, required considerable effort.

5. Despite the increasing number of displaced persons, solutions were found, including for refugees who received support in returning voluntarily to Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Rwanda, Somalia and the Sudan. Opportunities for local integration and resettlement were limited, however.

6. The New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (General Assembly resolution 71/1), together with the comprehensive refugee response framework

[1] In the present report, "Africa" refers to sub-Saharan Africa only.

[2] According to UNHCR, persons of concern includes refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced persons protected or assisted by UNHCR, returnees, stateless persons and others in a refugee-like situation.

[3] Statistics not available for all countries; actual number estimated to be higher.

contained therein and the process for developing a global compact on refugees that was subsequently launched, generated new impetus for finding solutions to displacement in Africa and strengthening support for the host countries and communities that provide protection and assistance to refugees, some for decades. As at June 2018, the comprehensive refugee response framework was being applied in eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa: Chad, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, Uganda and Zambia. Building on their national responses, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Uganda were also applying the comprehensive refugee response framework in the regional context through the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions for Somali Refugees and the Reintegration of Returnees in Somalia, supported by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). During the reporting period, African States were actively engaged in the process leading to the proposal of a global compact on refugees,[4] whose authors committed themselves to a more equitable sharing of the burden and responsibility for hosting and supporting the world's refugees.

II. Subregional overviews

A. Central Africa and the Great Lakes

7. In Central Africa and the Great Lakes region, the number of refugees increased from 1.35 million to 1.44 million, while the number of internally displaced persons rose sharply, from 3 million to 5.4 million. The conflicts in the Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo were the main sources of new internal displacement.

8. The situation in the Central African Republic deteriorated as a result of widespread violence and clashes between rival armed groups, as well as an increase in reprisals targeting the civilian population. That drove displacement to its highest level since the start of the conflict, in 2013. By the end of June 2018, the number of internally displaced persons reached more than 608,000. Some 572,000 refugees were hosted in neighbouring countries, including Cameroon (260,000), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (176,000), Chad (99,000) and the Congo (31,700). Moreover, nearly half of the population faced food insecurity and some 2.5 million persons were in need of humanitarian assistance.

9. The Democratic Republic of the Congo was severely affected by new waves of displacement in the east, including Tanganyika and South Kivu provinces, while intercommunal conflict in the Kasai region resulted in internal displacement and movements across the border towards Angola. The total number of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo increased by 16 per cent, from 537,000 to 781,700. The majority received protection in Uganda (288,800), the United Republic of Tanzania (84,500), Rwanda (82,400), Burundi (71,300), Zambia (41,400) and Angola (35,800). The Democratic Republic of the Congo also continued to host nearly 536,000 refugees, mainly from Rwanda (218,000), the Central African Republic (176,300) and South Sudan (93,100).

10. The refugee crisis in Burundi entered its fourth year, and refugees continued to arrive in neighbouring countries, although fewer than in previous years. As of May 2018, more than 178,000 persons were internally displaced and some 395,000 refugees from Burundi were in the region. Following a tripartite meeting with UNHCR and the Governments of Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania in

[4] Namely, the thematic discussions and stocktaking in the second half of 2017 and the six formal consultations in the first half of 2018.

March 2018, stakeholders agreed to work towards the voluntary repatriation of refugees from Burundi when conditions allowed.

B. East Africa, including the Horn of Africa

11. Continuing violence in Somalia and South Sudan, in addition to drought, food insecurity and other factors, left 7.2 million people internally displaced in the subregion and brought the number of refugees to more than 4.3 million. This marked a substantial increase compared with 2016, during which there had been 5.8 million internally displaced persons and 3.3 million refugees.

12. Somalia remained one of the most protracted displacement situations in the world, with more than 835,000 refugees hosted in the subregion and Yemen. It also had some 2.1 million internally displaced persons, an increase of some 570,000, owing to natural hazards and ongoing fighting. The largest numbers of refugees were in Yemen (256,000), Kenya (255,000), Ethiopia (256,000), Uganda (37,000) and Djibouti (12,100). Some 41,000 people returned voluntarily in 2017, mainly from Kenya; the majority returned to Kismaayo and Mogadishu.

13. Following renewed violence that broke out in South Sudan in July 2016, the humanitarian and displacement situation continued to deteriorate, and a cessation of hostilities agreed upon in December 2017 was short-lived. Compounded by a general state of lawlessness and food shortages, the situation led to large population movements across borders. The number of refugees increased by 1 million, reaching more than 2.5 million by the end of 2017. The majority were hosted in Uganda (1 million), the Sudan (768,100), Ethiopia (421,400), Kenya (111,500) and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (89,000). The number of internally displaced persons currently stands at approximately 1.9 million, more than 210,000 of whom shelter in United Nations protection-of-civilians sites. Protection risks, including the forced recruitment of children by armed groups and sexual and gender-based violence, remain high.

14. In the Sudan, there are currently some 2 million internally displaced persons, of whom 1.76 million were displaced by the conflict in Darfur and the rest displaced by conflict in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile State, where a lack of access has remained a challenge. The majority of the refugees from the Sudan are hosted in Chad (324,000), South Sudan (262,000) and Ethiopia (43,900).

C. Southern Africa

15. By the end of 2017, the subregion of Southern Africa hosted approximately 282,000 asylum seekers, 197,700 refugees, mainly from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia and Somalia, and 15,100 internally displaced persons. With respect to protection concerns, the erroneous application of the country-of-first-asylum concept, the detention of asylum seekers and refoulement were reported in several countries. Xenophobia also remained a problem.

16. Humanitarian agencies continued to respond to the needs of refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, in particular those in Angola and Zambia. In Zambia, the local government was supported by United Nations agencies and development partners in formulating a district development strategy and plan, which will inform the national development plan. In Mozambique, UNHCR, the World Food Programme (WFP), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme are implementing a

multi-year livelihoods project in the Maratane refugee camp aimed at increasing self-reliance and fostering local integration.

17. Malawi and Zambia are also pursuing efforts to allow refugees to live outside of camps. In Malawi, following a presidential decree on the relocation of the Dzaleka refugee camp, UNHCR and the Government began to develop a settlement approach in the Northern Region. In June 2018, the Government of Zambia announced its decision to relocate to a settlement its remaining refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, who were then being housed at a temporary transit centre.

D. West Africa

18. The situation in the subregion, in particular in the countries surrounding the Lake Chad Basin, was characterized by multiple armed conflicts, violent extremism and human rights violations, as well as growing poverty, severe food and water shortages and drought. This triggered significant population movements towards Northern Africa and within and across borders in large swathes of West Africa.

19. Five years into the crisis in Nigeria, the displacement situation remained grave, with ongoing hostilities in the north. By June 2018, there were some 286,900 refugees in Cameroon, Chad and the Niger, as well as more than 1.7 million internally displaced persons in north-eastern Nigeria. Freedom of movement and access to livelihood activities for internally displaced persons remained limited owing to security threats and military control. Clashes between herders and farmers in Benue State reportedly resulted in the displacement of 130,000 individuals, who sought refuge in government-run camps. Despite this, some 283,000 Nigerian refugees have returned from Cameroon, Chad and the Niger in recent years. UNHCR raised the concern that the voluntariness and sustainability of return for those coming from Cameroon was not assured. The situation also affected the Niger, in particular in the Diffa region, creating a security and protection crisis that affected more than 252,000 people, among them Nigerian refugees. In Cameroon, population movements remained dynamic in the Far North region owing to the activities of cross-border insurgents, and maintaining asylum space and respect for the principle of non-refoulement was of particular concern. In the second half of 2017, Nigeria began to receive large numbers of anglophone Cameroonians, which exacerbated the already complex humanitarian situation in the country.

20. In Mali, the volatile situation in the northern and central parts of the country, as well as insecurity in the border areas, led to continued displacement. As of June 2018, there were some 51,800 internally displaced persons in the country and more than 130,000 refugees in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and the Niger. Approximately 19,500 internally displaced persons were newly displaced and 4,600 were displaced for a second or third time, while some 1,200 refugees were newly arrived in the Tillabéri region of the Niger from Mali. Some 589,600 people returned home during the reporting period, including 526,500 internally displaced persons and 63,100 refugees.

III. Protection of refugees, internally displaced persons and stateless persons

A. Protection of refugees

21. Solidarity remained steadfast, with many countries continuing to maintain open borders and welcoming large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers. Nevertheless, instances of refoulement threatened the protection of refugees, and freedom of

movement was sometimes limited. Maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum also remained a challenge.

22. The capacity of national asylum systems to absorb new arrivals was stretched. In some countries, refugees were prevented from gaining access to asylum procedures or faced long waiting periods in order to have their status determined. In collaboration with relevant Governments, UNHCR provided support for capacity development, technical assistance and legal and policy advice to strengthen and support asylum systems in order to keep them accessible and fair to those seeking international protection. While several countries in Africa have begun to issue machine-readable travel documents to refugees, many refugees on the continent have no access to travel documents at all.

23. Registration and documentation play an important role in securing protection and solutions, including by ensuring access to vital services. The UNHCR biometric identification management system is currently being employed in 30 operations in Africa. During the reporting period, the system was deployed in Botswana, Nigeria and the Sudan.

24. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and UNHCR continued to support Governments in providing access to birth registration in refugee settlements in various countries, including Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. In Ethiopia and Uganda, legislative and policy frameworks have been amended to allow birth registration for refugees, which is a critical step in ensuring their legal recognition, reducing the risks of statelessness and facilitating their access to national services, including health care and education.

B. Mixed movements, trafficking and smuggling

25. The vast majority of asylum seekers and refugees remain in countries neighbouring their own. Those who move on travel alongside and use the same routes as migrants, generally remaining on the continent. Nevertheless, the movement of refugees and migrants across the Sahara towards North Africa, in particular Libya, and to the central Mediterranean Sea towards Europe continued, with an estimated 45,000 people arriving on the shores of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Spain between January and June 2018. Other movements took place from Central Africa and the Great Lakes to Southern Africa, and from the Horn of Africa across the Red Sea, including an estimated 100,000 new arrivals in Yemen.

26. Migrants and refugees travelling along migratory routes in Africa continued to be subject to violence, abuse and exploitation, including trafficking by smugglers and criminal networks. On the basis of 11,000 interviews conducted by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNICEF in 2017, it has been determined that 8 out of 10 children and young people travelling along the central Mediterranean route face protection challenges, such as exploitation and being held against their will. The African Union, the European Union and the United Nations established a joint task force in November 2017 to address the migrant situation in Libya. IOM assisted with the voluntary return of migrants, including unaccompanied children.

27. Nearly 55,000 refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR in Libya, including more than 10,000 in 2018, the majority of whom risked detention and arbitrary arrest. Some 8,000 are being detained and 4,500 are of concern to UNHCR. Conditions in detention centres have deteriorated as a result of increased overcrowding and a lack of basic living standards, which have been compounded by the limited prospects for solutions to their situation. Riots and hunger strikes have occurred inside detention centres. A number of serious security incidents have placed United Nations staff at physical risk. Since November 2017, 1,858 refugees have been

evacuated from Libya: 1,536 to the Niger, 312 to Italy and 10 to Romania. The Libyan Coast Guard has rescued or intercepted 12,910 refugees and migrants (8,860 men, 1,978 women and 1,216 children) at sea during 93 operations. The main nationalities of those who disembarked were Nigerian (1,696), Eritrean (1,409) and Sudanese (983). Since the beginning of 2018, 97 bodies have been recovered from Libyan waters and 583 lives have been lost at sea.

28. In response to the imprisonment of thousands of people in poor and insecure conditions in detention facilities in Libya, an evacuation transit mechanism was established in the Niger in late 2017. The mechanism provides access to protection and solutions for vulnerable asylum seekers and refugees evacuated from Libya. With the support of the Government of the Niger and the European Commission, the mechanism has already succeeded in evacuating more than 1,500 people, including unaccompanied children.

C. Protection of internally displaced persons

29. Given the 14.5 million internally displaced persons in Africa, the promotion of the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa for further ratification remained vital. Thus far, it has been signed by 40 of the 54 States members of the African Union and ratified by 27. While no African State has formally adopted a law or policy based on the Convention since its entry into force in 2012, a number of countries have drafted legislation or policies that are awaiting adoption.

30. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement provide a framework for preventing, addressing and resolving internal displacement on the continent. In April 2018, the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles, a three-year multi-stakeholder plan of action was launched in order to prevent internal displacement and advance protection and solutions for internally displaced persons. Driven by the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons, UNHCR and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the plan of action was developed in consultation with States, IOM, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other United Nations agencies, the International Committee of the Red Cross, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and experts. The thematic priorities of the plan of action have been developed for the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, the Niger, Somalia and South Sudan.

31. In March 2018, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of internally displaced persons called for a protection strategy in the Niger to address some of the challenges there, making recommendations to support the thematic priorities of the multi-stakeholder plan of action.

D. Sexual and gender-based violence: prevention and response

32. While it has been confirmed that incidents of sexual and gender-based violence have occurred in numerous conflict situations, agencies believe that such incidents are underreported. Sexual violence is employed as a tactic of war, and the accountability of perpetrators remains limited. In South Sudan, IOM interviewed more than 2,500 internally displaced persons in protection-of-civilians sites; nearly half of them reported that a woman or girl in their household had experienced some form of sexual and gender-based violence. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, sexual violence perpetrated by parties to the conflict increased demonstrably in 2017.

33. Humanitarian agencies prioritized sexual and gender-based violence prevention and response through community engagement, increased access to essential health services and the provision of mental health and psychosocial support and legal aid. In Nigeria, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) built and managed seven new "empowerment spaces" for displaced women, focusing on the prevention of and response to sexual and gender-based violence. More than 110,000 people were attended to, and some 16,000 received support for livelihood activities. The deployment by UNHCR of experts on sexual and gender-based violence at the onset of emergencies also helped to mitigate the risk of such violence and improved access to vital services for survivors. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights provided legal aid and support to survivors of conflict-related sexual violence.

E. Protection of children

34. Conflicts throughout the region exacerbated the protection situation for refugee and internally displaced children. The risks included physical and psychological harm, forced recruitment, sexual and gender-based violence, child labour, abduction and trafficking. In Nigeria, children, mainly girls under the age of 15 years, were used increasingly by militants to carry out bomb attacks in the north-east. UNICEF continues to work to secure the release of children associated with armed groups. In South Sudan, various armed groups handed over some 800 children to UNICEF in 2018. Family tracing and the reunification of unaccompanied and separated children with their families remained a priority.

35. In the Horn of Africa alone, some 8.7 million children are at risk of malnutrition, face water shortages, lack access to health care and have had their education disrupted. To contribute to a safe environment, UNICEF and its partners have strengthened child protection systems, provided psychosocial support, trained caregivers and established child-friendly spaces that have facilitated structured recreational activities. During the reporting period, more than 384,000 refugee children benefited from these services in the Eastern and Southern Africa subregions.

F. Statelessness

36. Key international and regional commitments to eliminating statelessness in Africa were reaffirmed and pursued during the reporting period. The implementation of the Banjul Plan of Action of the Economic Community of West African States on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017–2024 continued, including the adoption by Burkina Faso and Mali of national action plans to eradicate statelessness. Burkina Faso also acceded to the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness of 1961.

37. At two meetings, held in South Africa and Côte d'Ivoire, experts reviewed and finalized the African Union draft protocol on nationality and statelessness, which will be submitted later in 2018 to the special technical committees of the Union on migration, refugees and internally displaced persons and on justice and legal affairs, before its adoption by member States.

38. Building on the UNHCR 10-year campaign to end statelessness, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the 12 States members of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region signed the Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness in October 2017, committing to ratifying the international conventions on statelessness, undertaking legal reform by adapting national laws and policies, strengthening civil status systems and developing national action plans.

39. In Madagascar, as a result of recent changes in the nationality law, more than 1,360 nationality certificates were issued to children born to Malagasy mothers and foreign fathers. Training was provided to Governments on preventing and reducing statelessness, including in Eswatini, Namibia and South Africa.

IV. Humanitarian response and operational challenges

A. Capacity and constraints

40. Insecurity hampered relief efforts in Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. The use of improvised explosive devices caused civilian casualties. In Nigeria, humanitarian access was impeded by ongoing hostilities, which left 930,000 people with limited assistance from the international community.

41. Bureaucratic impediments, poor infrastructure, the limited presence of partners and funding constraints undermined the delivery of protection and assistance. In several countries, humanitarian organizations faced barriers to importing lifesaving drugs and other humanitarian goods, while delays in registering NGO partners also affected the humanitarian response.

42. Allegations of fraud, the misappropriation of funds, misconduct and exploitation surfaced in several refugee operations in Africa, leading to investigations and remedial actions by agencies and the countries involved. Measures to enhance accountability and transparency were taken in response.

43. Humanitarian agencies responded to one system-wide level 3 emergency, declared by the Inter-agency Standing Committee in October 2017 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Although the emergency was deactivated in April 2018, the situation remains critical, as recently described by the Human Rights Council.[5] Inter-agency contingency planning was undertaken in more than 20 country operations.

B. Food and nutrition

44. Food insecurity and severe malnutrition affected many countries in the region, with reductions in food rations due to funding shortfalls in Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ethiopia, Rwanda, South Sudan, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. Approximately 3.3 million refugees received less than the standard amount of food assistance. Serious protection concerns emerged, including the use of negative coping strategies, such as child labour and survival sex, to meet basic needs.

45. In South Sudan, thanks to improved access and a massive humanitarian response, a large-scale famine was averted in 2017. The situation remained dire and was marked by extreme levels of food insecurity. Prolonged conflict in north-eastern Nigeria has undermined food security, in particular in areas that are inaccessible to humanitarian organizations. In Somalia, widespread food insecurity was caused by poor agricultural production, persistent drought and livestock losses.

46. To respond to food insecurity and malnutrition, humanitarian agencies scaled up lifesaving interventions. UNICEF, WFP and their partners supported the treatment of children suffering from severe acute malnutrition. Children were provided with

[5] See www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=23263&LangID=E.

vitamin supplements and fortified foods, while mothers and caregivers were counselled and provided with safe spaces in which to feed their children.

C. Cash assistance and financial inclusion

47. UNHCR and WFP scaled up the use of cash assistance to address food insecurity, enhance protection and promote the well-being of refugees, internally displaced persons and returnees. Cash-based interventions are ongoing, with some of the largest programmes carried out in the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda and Somalia. Between July 2017 and June 2018, UNHCR disbursed some $53.9 million in cash in Africa to respond to a variety of needs. Of that total, $28.2 million was provided through partners. WFP assisted more than 2.9 million people[6] between June and December 2017 and 4.7 million between January and June 2018 through cash-based transfers.

48. Significant investments were made in the strategic use of cash-based interventions to promote the financial inclusion of refugees and others of concern by facilitating their access to bank and mobile money accounts in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, the Niger, Rwanda, Somalia and Zambia. To strengthen existing infrastructure and the provision of financial services in displacement-affected areas, UNHCR launched a call for financial service providers in 16 countries in Africa.

D. Public health

49. The health of refugees and internally displaced persons was affected by severe malnutrition and outbreaks of disease during the reporting period. UNHCR, working with Governments and their partners, successfully contributed to the management of multiple outbreaks, including cholera and acute watery diarrhoea (in Kenya, the Sudan and Uganda), measles (in Angola), typhoid (in Rwanda) and monkey pox (in the Congo). The World Health Organization (WHO) strengthened both preventive and curative services for meningitis, cholera, malaria, yellow fever, measles and Ebola in the Lake Chad region. Acute diarrhoea and cholera remained the primary concern in the Horn of Africa, with nearly 120,000 cases reported in the region in 2017. The majority of the cholera cases were in Somalia (more than 78,000, representing a 550 per cent increase compared with 2016).

50. Preventive measures were instrumental in reducing the incidence of disease, including tuberculosis and HIV and AIDS. Comprehensive services for the prevention, testing and treatment of HIV were reinforced in Cameroon, the Niger, Rwanda, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zambia. United Nations agencies worked to ensure access to health care and advocate the inclusion of refugees in national health systems. Efforts were also made to strengthen mental health support for refugees, including through the training of primary health-care workers in the Congo, South Sudan and Uganda. UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO and their partners continued to carry out water, sanitation and hygiene programmes, with the aim of improving health conditions for millions of people. In 2017, UNHCR reached nearly 4.2 million people in 30 African countries with water and sanitation services.

[6] Including refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons and residents in the region.

E. Education

51. Access to education continued to improve, including through the progressive inclusion of refugees in national education systems. Significant progress was made in Ethiopia on behalf of refugee children at all levels of education, consistent with the Government's pledges. In Djibouti, refugees have begun to use the national education curriculum, while the Government of Chad has included 108 schools serving refugee camps and sites in the national education system. The Government of Uganda, with support from UNICEF and UNHCR, developed a three-year response plan (for the period 2018–2021) for the full inclusion of refugee children in the national education system, which is expected to benefit 675,000 children.

52. UNHCR and the Global Partnership for Education expanded efforts to include refugees in national multi-year education plans, including in Burkina Faso, Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Liberia, Mali, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. In 2017, the Government of Chad elected to apply accelerated funds from the Partnership to the education-related needs of refugees and returnees in the Lake Chad Basin region.

53. UNICEF and its partners provided access to quality education to more than 327,000 refugee children and adolescents in Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. With the help of the Vodafone Foundation, information technology brought digital learning to refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Kenya, South Sudan and the United Republic of Tanzania. Connected learning, combining digital platforms with traditional classroom teaching, provided higher education for refugees in Chad, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda and the Sudan. In December 2017, IGAD member States adopted the Djibouti Declaration and Action Plan on Refugee Education, in which they committed themselves to the inclusion of refugees in national education plans by 2020. Additional IGAD commitments included the establishment of regional education quality standards and regional skills development for refugees, as well as accreditation and certification of education programmes. The Nairobi Declaration and Call for Action on Education, issued in April 2018, included additional commitments to making education systems more inclusive of refugees, in line with Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Sustainable Development Goals.

54. Access to education remained restricted in some countries owing to conflict and other barriers, such as the collapse of national systems, the destruction of facilities and the loss of teachers, the lack of identity documents and tuition fees. Some 8.7 million refugee and internally displaced children require access to education.

F. Shelter and livelihoods

55. The shelter-related needs of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa continue to grow, mostly as a result of new displacement; 1 million refugees and more than 9 million internally displaced persons have been identified by the United Nations and its partners as being in urgent need of shelter-related assistance. With nearly 60 per cent of refugees in Africa living in urban areas, a shift in response strategies is needed to address the problems of urban poverty and vulnerability. In the context of internal displacement, the Global Shelter Cluster supports such responses, coordinating 269 partners and more than $130 million in funding.

56. Providing access to the labour market and promoting economic inclusion benefit both refugees, by helping to foster self-reliance, and host communities. For displaced women and girls in particular, humanitarian efforts addressing resilience and self-reliance provide empowerment and enable the active engagement and leadership of

women in helping to bridge the humanitarian-development divide. In 2017, UNDP and UNHCR strengthened their collaboration on livelihood programming, including cash for work, vocational training and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in a number of countries. In the Sudan, support was provided to more than 958,400 people, including internally displaced persons, returnees and host community members, in the areas of agriculture, small business and entrepreneurial skills training.

57. In line with the New York Declaration, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNHCR are working to improve access to the labour market and promote inclusive economic development. In Ethiopia, ILO launched an initiative in April 2018 to support the operationalization of the Ethiopia Economic Opportunities Programme and the national application of the comprehensive refugee response framework in order to facilitate livelihood opportunities and access to the labour market. WFP contributed to the application of the framework in Uganda by strengthening livelihoods for refugees and host communities through an agriculture and market support programme.

58. UNHCR continued to promote the "graduation approach" in Burkina Faso, Mozambique, the Sudan, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, targeting refugees and host community members living in extreme poverty. It also launched a market access, design and empowerment initiative that connects refugee artisans with markets in Burkina Faso, Kenya and the United Republic of Tanzania.

59. The private sector assisted in addressing displacement, including through livelihood programming. An IKEA Foundation-supported project in the Dollo Ado refugee camp in Ethiopia helped refugees to move from assistance to self-reliance, diversifying livelihood opportunities for them and their host community.

G. Security of humanitarian workers

60. The delivery of humanitarian assistance continued to be impeded by violence and volatility. In 2017, there were 145 incidents affecting humanitarian workers from the United Nations and its partners. A total of 60 national staff members and 6 international staff members were killed. Kidnappings affected 36 national staff members and 7 international staff members.

61. The Central African Republic, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan had the highest incidences of deaths and injuries among humanitarian workers. In South Sudan, 107 aid workers have been killed since the conflict began in December 2013, including 30 in 2017 and 9 in the first six months of 2018.

V. Ending forced displacement

62. Resolving the problem of displacement requires a combination of solutions, including, for refugees, the three traditional durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration, as well as complementary pathways for admission to third countries. For internally displaced persons, solutions include return, local integration and settlement elsewhere in the country. Although failure to address the root causes of conflict in Africa resulted in limited progress towards solutions, there were several important developments in that regard.

63. In line with the commitments made in the Nairobi Declaration on Durable Solutions, IGAD member States adopted the Road Map and Results Framework of the Nairobi Action Plan to support efforts to deliver durable solutions. They set out a comprehensive regional approach aimed at creating an environment conducive to voluntary and sustainable return; furthering durable solutions by maintaining

protection space and promoting the self-reliance and inclusion of refugees in countries of asylum; and strengthening subregional and international cooperation.

A. Voluntary return

64. Voluntary repatriation, based on an informed decision, is the preferred solution for many refugees. In 2017, UNHCR supported the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Somalia (41,000), Rwanda (18,000), Burundi (13,000) and Côte d'Ivoire (8,300), with smaller numbers returning to Mali and the Sudan. Some 282,800 Nigerians and 78,600 refugees from the Central African Republic also returned spontaneously, despite fragile conditions in these countries. In Ethiopia, more than 55,000 of the conflict-affected internally displaced persons in the Oromia region have either returned or settled elsewhere in the country.

65. The application of the comprehensive refugee response framework for the Somali refugee situation helped create conditions conducive to voluntary return, including measures to strengthen security, build government capacity and support the country's national development plan. The Government of Somalia organized a national forum on durable solutions for refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons, while work on the durable solutions initiative continued. With support from the Peacebuilding Fund, a Kenya-Somalia cross-border project was undertaken to improve the reintegration of returnees into Somalia. In addition, post-return monitoring was launched in October 2017 to profile refugees returning from Somalia and to better understand their needs.

66. The Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees, involving the Governments of Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania, together with UNHCR, continued to work to facilitate voluntary returns. More than 20,000 refugees have registered to return to Burundi in a programme that targets 72,000 persons. Meanwhile, a joint programme carried out by UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA and FAO promotes conditions for sustainable return, focusing on access to justice and social services, the rule of law, improved security, livelihood opportunities and housing, land and property rights.

67. To support sustainability, humanitarian agencies collaborated with development and peacebuilding partners. Internally displaced persons in the Central African Republic and Central African refugees in neighbouring countries were included in the national perception survey on justice, security and peace that will inform State-building efforts. UNHCR and its partners are enhancing the access of returnees to housing, land and property. In the Sudan, a joint United Nations programme is strengthening the justice and security sectors, including through dispute resolution mechanisms, and the re-establishment of the criminal justice system in pilot areas of return for the internally displaced.

B. Local integration

68. Several countries enabled the local integration of refugees, including by providing durable legal status and naturalization, as envisaged in article 34 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. Guinea-Bissau granted citizenship to Senegalese refugees living in a protracted situation, and Zambia implemented the decision to provide long-term residency to former Rwandan refugees. In the context of the Nairobi Declaration, Ethiopia and Kenya pledged to integrate certain groups of refugees.

C. Resettlement

69. Resettlement continues to serve as a protection tool to meet the needs of some of the most vulnerable refugees. After a steady increase in resettlement submissions from Africa between 2012 and 2016, the trend was reversed in 2017, with just over 21,500 refugees submitted for resettlement, owing to a drop in available places — a 51 per cent decrease compared with 2016. Departures for resettlement countries also declined, from 38,900 in 2016 to 15,800 in 2017. Some 60 per cent of all submissions from the region involved refugees from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, followed by Eritrea, Somalia and the Sudan.

70. The Core Group for Enhanced Resettlement and Complementary Pathways along the Central Mediterranean Route was established in August 2017. Comprising resettlement States, the European Union, IOM and UNHCR, the Group seeks to mobilize support for resettlement of the most vulnerable refugees and reduce dangerous onward movements across the Mediterranean. The 15 priority countries of asylum, which extend to the Middle East and North Africa region, are Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Chad, Djibouti, Egypt, Ethiopia, Kenya, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, the Niger, the Sudan and Tunisia. The response has been modest; of the 40,000 resettlement places requested by UNHCR in September 2017, some 25,000 have been pledged.

D. Complementary pathways

71. Complementary pathways for admission can provide additional opportunities for achieving long-lasting solutions for refugees. By learning new skills, contributing to the labour market, acquiring an education or reuniting with family members in a third country, refugees can enjoy a safe and lawful stay in a place where their international protection needs are met. While refugees face many barriers and challenges in accessing complementary pathways — for example, obtaining exit permits, entry visas or travel documents or meeting strict eligibility criteria — significant progress was made in Africa in 2017. At the regional level, the adoption of the African Union Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the African Economic Community Relating to Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment will facilitate complementary pathways.

VI. Partnerships and coordination

A. Inter-agency cooperation

72. The UNHCR refugee coordination model guides that Office's coordination of operational planning and resource mobilization in refugee situations. As part of the overall humanitarian response, regional refugee coordinators for the refugee situations in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria and South Sudan developed regional refugee response plans, which provided a common platform for planning, delivery and fundraising for partners in the refugee response. The regional refugee response plans articulate the coordinated strategy of some 180 partners across 15 countries to respond to the main refugee crises in Africa. Under the umbrella of the Inter-agency Standing Committee, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs coordinated the development of inter-agency humanitarian response plans, including response for internally displaced persons. In 2017, however, only 28.6 per cent of the humanitarian appeals and strategies in sub-Saharan Africa

included a gender analysis.[7] To address the needs of people displaced by conflict, it is recommended that sex- and age-disaggregated data be collected and used at every stage of the humanitarian programme cycle.

73. The coordination of the inter-agency response to internally displaced persons is the responsibility of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the Inter-agency Standing Committee system, with the protection cluster ensuring that protection is central to the humanitarian response. In 2017, the global protection cluster contributed to the response in Burundi, Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan. Camp coordination and camp management clusters, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, supported the response in the Central African Republic, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Niger, Nigeria, Somalia and South Sudan. The global camp coordination and camp management cluster focused on building the coordination and management capacity of local responders through continent-wide training in Morocco and Senegal.

B. Partnerships with non-governmental organizations

74. The majority of the United Nations programmes were implemented in close cooperation with local, national and international NGOs across some 48 country operations in sub-Saharan Africa. Partnerships with NGOs were crucial to the implementation of lifesaving programmes, the delivery of assistance, the realization of protection and solutions, and advocacy efforts.

75. NGOs also played an important role in the implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework and the development of the global compact on refugees, as part of a whole-of-society approach. National and international NGOs participate in comprehensive refugee response framework facilitation mechanisms led by Governments, leveraging their technical expertise, local knowledge and contacts with the affected communities. In Uganda, for example, NGOs seconded a policy analyst to the comprehensive refugee response framework secretariat in the Office of the Prime Minister. The Regional Durable Solutions secretariat, a coalition of 12 NGOs, has contributed to the implementation of the comprehensive refugee response framework in East Africa, including the Horn of Africa.

C. Development cooperation

76. Progress was made in addressing forced displacement through development planning and cooperation. Cooperation with the World Bank Group was strengthened through an increasing number of joint activities at the field level, including where its International Development Association 18 subwindow for refugees and host communities had been launched. To support this endeavour, a series of World Bank-UNHCR missions explored innovative ways to join humanitarian and country-level development systems in the delivery of sustainable benefits for both communities. Financing was approved for Cameroon ($274 million towards access to health care, education, social safety nets and social and economic infrastructure), Ethiopia ($202 million towards economic opportunities for refugees and host communities) and Uganda ($360 million for infrastructure and $335 million for water management to improve service delivery).

[7] In contrast, globally, 53.8 per cent of all humanitarian appeals and strategies included a gender analysis.

77. With support from the international community, the Uganda National Development Plan II envisages the inclusion of refugees in national development planning processes through the Settlement Transformative Agenda of the Government, which is also supported by the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

78. Collaboration was deepened with the International Finance Corporation, building on its study entitled "Kakuma as a marketplace", which provides the private sector with data that will allow for informed decision-making on the provision of goods, services and employment in refugee-hosting areas. The Corporation will conduct similar studies in other African countries hosting refugees.

79. In the spirit of longer-term approaches to sustainable development, UNDP implemented a number of projects in several comprehensive refugee response framework rollout countries. In Zambia, UNDP and the Government are working on a programme to support the local integration of former Angolan and Rwandan refugees. The programme allows the former refugees, who receive permanent residency in Zambia, to gain access to land and engage in income-earning opportunities, alongside the host communities. A community project in Ethiopia, implemented by the Government, UNHCR, UNDP, UNICEF, UN-Women and the United Nations police, supports social cohesion and policing in areas with many refugees.

80. The Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development of the European Commission has contributed to the regional approach to the refugee situation in Somalia. The Japan International Cooperation Agency increased its support for refugees and host communities through an area-based approach in northern Uganda. Support was also received from development ministries and agencies of Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, the Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The expanded involvement of development actors in a manner that is complementary to humanitarian efforts has been a key focus in the development of the global compact on refugees.

D. Partnerships with regional organizations

81. Regional organizations played a crucial role in addressing challenges and promoting solutions for displaced populations in Africa. IGAD was instrumental in supporting the development of the regional cooperation framework for the Somali refugee situation. In December 2017, IGAD, together with the Government of Djibouti, hosted the first regional meeting of education ministers.

82. The African Union remains a central partner in addressing the situation of refugees, returnees and displaced persons in Africa. In November 2017, the African Union held its fifth humanitarian symposium in Nairobi to build a common vision for protection, solidarity and solutions for protracted situations and large-scale refugee movements in Africa and share lessons learned from the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework. The African Development Bank invested in a number of fragile States, supporting education, strengthening institutions and improving food security and agricultural development. In addition, the Southern African Development Community developed its draft regional policy framework on the management of asylum seekers and refugees, aligning it with the comprehensive refugee response framework. Partnerships with the Economic Community of West African States also remained strong, leading to numerous advancements in addressing statelessness.

VII. Funding

83. Between July 2017 and the end of May 2018, the Emergency Relief Coordinator allocated $234 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund to support lifesaving activities in 16 countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Of that amount, some $196 million enabled aid agencies to provide humanitarian assistance in response to displacement crises in 13 countries. This included allocations from the Fund's rapid-response window ($88 million) and underfunded emergencies window ($108 million). The Fund's allocations during this period included $78 million to assist internally displaced persons in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Congolese refugees who had fled to Burundi, Uganda and Zambia. Some $20 million also went towards providing lifesaving assistance to people displaced from the Central African Republic.

84. Aid agencies in the Democratic Republic of the Congo received the highest amount of funding ($66 million) to scale up assistance to people affected by the situation in the east and in the Kasai region, as well as to sustain critical humanitarian activities for other conflict-affected people in the country. This was followed by Uganda ($23 million), the Sudan ($19 million), Chad ($18 million), Cameroon ($10 million), the Central African Republic ($10 million), Ethiopia ($10 million), Nigeria ($10 million) and the United Republic of Tanzania ($10 million). The sectors that received the largest financial support were multisectoral refugee assistance ($31 million), food assistance ($30 million) and water, sanitation and hygiene ($23 million).

85. During 2017, the country-based pooled funds operational in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Somalia, South Sudan and the Sudan allocated $327 million to support lifesaving humanitarian activities. As at 31 July 2018, those country-based pooled funds had allocated $156 million in that regard.

86. Underfunding constrained humanitarian action on several fronts. The UNHCR 2017 budget for Africa of $2,925.2 million, which included supplementary budgets for unforeseen emergencies, was only 49 per cent funded. This led to a reduction in services, such as health care and education, and affected protection monitoring and livelihood assistance. Notwithstanding efforts to mobilize funds for the various regional refugee response plans, funding remained insufficient for the Burundi (21 per cent) and South Sudan (34 per cent) regional refugee response plans. Several humanitarian response plans were also seriously underfunded: the Burundi situation received 19.3 per cent of the requirements ($141.8 million) and the Central African Republic situation only 22.5 per cent ($515.6 million).

VIII. Conclusions and recommendations

87. The growing level of forced displacement in Africa and continued conflict, which is preventing millions of people from returning to their homes, are deeply concerning trends. At the same time, the commitments reflected in the New York Declaration and the comprehensive refugee response framework are forging new initiatives to strengthen protection and solutions and to ease the burden on host communities.

88. Stronger synergies, coordination and partnerships, embedded in a whole-of-society approach, are contributing to a more effective and coherent response to displacement. The leadership of host countries in the pursuit of comprehensive approaches is to be commended and warrants increased support from the international community. The strengthened engagement of development actors and international

and regional financial institutions is giving refugees, returnees and host communities a chance at a better life. Progressive and inclusive policies and laws enacted by States, which support freedom of movement, the right to work and greater socioeconomic inclusion, are strengthening resilience and livelihoods.

89. **Significant progress has been made in the development of the global compact on refugees, which will support, strengthen and further anchor these trends through the cooperative efforts of the international community. Indeed, international cooperation to address the key challenges of humanitarian assistance has been at the core of the discussions leading to the global compact. With that in mind:**

(a) **All States are urged to support actively the adoption and implementation of the global compact on refugees, which is aimed at improving international responses to large-scale refugee situations by easing pressure on host States, enhancing refugee self-reliance, expanding access to third-country solutions and supporting conditions in countries of origin that enable refugees to return in safety and dignity;**

(b) **All States are urged to address the root causes of displacement and to foster peace, stability and prosperity in Africa, with the paramount objective of preventing conflict and alleviating human suffering;**

(c) **All parties are called upon to ensure respect for international humanitarian law and human rights law, including by protecting civilians during armed conflict and preventing serious human rights violations — in particular sexual and gender-based violence;**

(d) **Recalling that the principle of non-refoulement, enshrined in the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, is considered to be a rule of customary international law, States are reminded of their obligation to respect the right to seek asylum and to keep their borders open to those fleeing conflict and persecution. Similarly, States are urged to ensure that the repatriation movements of refugees are safe, dignified and voluntary;**

(e) **All States and non-State actors are called upon to facilitate rapid and unimpeded access to refugees, internally displaced persons and other victims of conflict; to take all appropriate steps to protect humanitarian personnel; and to ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum;**

(f) **African States that have not yet done so are encouraged to consider acceding to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and to work towards the goal of eradicating statelessness by 2024;**

(g) **Recognizing the importance of the principle of international solidarity and burden- and responsibility-sharing, States — in cooperation with relevant stakeholders — are encouraged to implement the commitments made in the New York Declaration and the leaders' summit on refugees, and to provide their full support for the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework in Africa;**

(h) **States are encouraged to support good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law, and to promote inclusion and sustainable development, in line with Agenda 2063 of the African Union and the Sustainable Development Goals, including by engaging in new partnerships with development actors;**

(i) **In anticipation of the tenth anniversary of the Kampala Convention, African States that have not yet signed or ratified that legal instrument are**

encouraged to do so, and those that have ratified the instrument are urged to fully incorporate it into domestic law to allow for its effective implementation at the national level. Furthermore, parties are called upon to reduce the vulnerability, impoverishment and marginalization of internally displaced persons by considering options for local integration or settlement in another part of the country, should return not be possible;

(j) All parties are encouraged to prioritize education and livelihoods in any humanitarian response in order to prevent generations of refugees and internally displaced persons from living in poverty and to enable them to contribute to the development of their countries in the future;

(k) All parties are called upon to strengthen accountability towards the displaced, including by mitigating the risk of fraud, misconduct and exploitation;

(l) Donors are urged to ensure the availability of adequate, flexible and predictable funding to help address the unprecedented needs of refugees and internally displaced persons in Africa and to ensure multi-year, flexible funding that transcends the humanitarian-development divide.

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Programme budget for the biennium 2018–2019

United Nations pension system

Comprehensive audit of the governance structure and related processes of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Summary

Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/262 A, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has conducted a comprehensive audit of the governance structure and related processes of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board.

The audit showed that the Board needed to strengthen its governance in critical areas such as: (a) achieving fair and equitable representation of member organizations on the Board; (b) entrusting its Standing Committee with the power to provide more effective oversight over the operations of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund; (c) separating the functions of the Secretary and the Chief Executive Officer to ensure the Board's independence from the management of the Fund; (d) implementing effective performance management to promote a culture of accountability; and (e) setting the appropriate tone with regard to integrity and ethical values.

The Board also needed to take additional steps including: (a) facilitating the transparent and democratic representation of beneficiaries; (b) retiring its Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee, which has been duplicating the work of the Investments Committee and the Committee of Actuaries; (c) ensuring that the secretariat of the Fund utilizes resources in accordance with legislative decisions; and (d) undertaking proper succession planning for the positions of Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer to allow adequate time for a competitive selection process.

The Board accepted seven recommendations but did not accept six others, including two critical recommendations concerning: (a) the fair and equitable representation of member organizations on the Board; and (b) the separation of functions of the Secretary of the Board and the Chief Executive Officer of the Fund to

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ensure the Board's independence from the management of the Fund. OIOS maintains that these two recommendations relate to critical issues concerning the Board's governance structure. In the Board's response, it was indicated that four of the six unaccepted recommendations (including the two critical recommendations) were acceptable to the representatives of the United Nations participants but not to the other constituent groups on the Board.

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I. Introduction

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/262 A, the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) conducted a comprehensive audit of the governance structure and related processes of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board from February to May 2018. The objective of the audit was to: (a) determine whether the governance structure of the Board and related processes were optimally designed and operating effectively; and (b) assess the checks and balances between the Board and the leadership of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund.

2. The audit scope included a review of: (a) the structure, composition and functions of the Board, including its committees and working groups; (b) the regulations, rules, policies and procedures relating to the governance of the Fund; (c) the decision-making and consultative processes through which the Board discharges its responsibilities; and (d) related processes and activities of the Fund. The audit methodology included interviews with process owners and stakeholders, a review of relevant documentation, questionnaires/surveys, analytical reviews and tests of controls. The audit did not include a review of the General Assembly's role in the overall governance structure. The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing.

3. OIOS considers recommendations 2, 5, 8, 9 and 10 to be critical, and recommendations 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12 and 13 to be important.

II. United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board

A. Roles and responsibilities of the Board

4. In its resolution 248 (III) of December 1948, the General Assembly established the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund and decided that the Fund was to be administered by the Board, whereas the investment of the Fund's assets was to be decided upon by the Secretary-General, after consultation with an investments committee and after having heard any observations or suggestions by the Board concerning investment policy. Article 4 (a) of the regulations of the Fund states that the Fund shall be administered by the Board, a staff pension committee for each member organization, and a secretariat to the Board and to each such committee. The Board is accountable to the General Assembly for its primary responsibility of serving the Fund's participants and beneficiaries. Pursuant to the Fund's accountability statement, the Board is to play the role of an oversight, policymaking and decision-making body of the Fund secretariat in pension administration. According to the Fund regulations and rules, the responsibilities of the Board include: (a) reporting to the General Assembly and member organizations on financial and operational matters relating to the Fund; (b) making recommendations to the Secretary-General on the appointment of the Fund's Secretary/Chief Executive Officer and the Deputy Secretary/Deputy Chief Executive Officer; and (c) monitoring the Fund's solvency through actuarial valuation. The Board is also ultimately responsible for establishing and maintaining an effective internal control system and setting the Fund's expectations with respect to integrity and ethical values.

B. Terms of reference, competency requirements and performance evaluation

5. In accordance with good governance practices, it is recommended that, given the considerable responsibility and decision-making authority vested in them, boards

and their committees should have clear terms of reference for their members that define their roles and responsibilities, desirable competencies and performance expectations. While the Board has established terms of reference for its various committees, there have been no specific terms of reference for Board members. Some responsibilities are described in the Fund's regulations and rules, but these do not cover aspects such as desirable competencies and performance evaluation.

6. The Board's members represent one of three constituent groups: (a) governing bodies (the General Assembly of the United Nations and the governing bodies of its other member organizations); (b) executive heads (the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the chief administrative officers of its other member organizations); and (c) participants in member organizations. The establishment of formal terms of reference, including the desirable competencies, may help constituents to make better informed choices concerning their representatives on the Board. The absence of clear terms of reference may undermine consistency in performance and lead to misinterpretations regarding issues such as term limits and conflict of interest.

7. Many private and public organizations set some post-employment restrictions on former employees for specific periods of time, such as those set out in the Secretary-General's bulletin concerning staff involved in the procurement process (ST/SGB/2006/15), to ensure that their positions of authority, which allow them access to confidential or privileged information, are not put to improper use after their separation. Currently, there are no restrictions on former staff of the Fund from becoming members of staff pension committees or representatives of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) on the Board after their separation from the Fund. The Board prevented two staff members of the Fund secretariat, who had been elected by participants through a process conducted by the United Nations Staff Union, from attending its 2017 session on the grounds that such participation gave rise to conflict of interest. However, that decision was vacated by the United Nations Appeals Tribunal.

8. However, there were no restrictions or time limits on former staff (in particular senior managers) of the Fund secretariat or the Office of Investment Management from becoming Board members after their separation from the Fund, and no restrictions or limitations on former Board members from potentially seeking regular employment with the Fund. The Board needs to consider these aspects and establish appropriate rules.

9. Since 2010, the Board has used surveys to evaluate its performance. The surveys were primarily meant to help to identify areas of expertise and to determine whether the Board or its individual members were lacking certain critical skills. However, the survey design did not assist in identifying the areas of expertise or the lack thereof. For example, in the survey conducted in 2016, 41 per cent of respondents agreed that the ongoing process could identify the expertise needed for the Board but did not indicate specific areas of expertise or competency that needed improvement. The benefits of such self-evaluation would be limited unless specific areas for improvement are identified and there is follow through in that regard.

Recommendation 1

The Board should: (a) establish clear terms of reference for its members outlining, inter alia, the desirable competencies for their appointment and any appropriate restrictions or limitations; and (b) review its current methodology for self-evaluation to make the exercise more effective and useful.

Comments of the Board. The Board did not accept recommendation 1 (a), stating that the membership of the Board was determined in accordance with the regulations and rules of procedure and that the procedures currently followed by constituent groups could be strengthened to ensure that their representatives fulfil their fiduciary and other responsibilities. The Board accepted recommendation 1 (b).

Comments of OIOS. OIOS remains of the view that the Board should establish clear terms of reference for its members in accordance with good governance practices.

C. Size and composition of the Board

10. Article 5 of the Fund's regulations states that the Board shall consist of 33 members and have a tripartite structure that allows for equal representation of the governing bodies, the executive heads and the participants.

11. In 2006, after considering various options, a working group of the Board recommended that the Board consist of 21 members. The working group put forward a second option to retain the existing 33-member Board if the recommended size of 21 was not accepted. Eventually, the Board decided to maintain its size at 33 members and adopted annual rotation schedules for Board and Standing Committee membership for the next five years. Member organizations that did not have a seat on the Board were not included in the rotation schedule. The Board's decision in 2004 that "any member organizations already with a seat on the Board should not lose that seat even if its participant population decreased over time" has inhibited an objective review and adjustment of the Board's size to assure economy, efficiency and effectiveness in its operations.

12. In addition to the 33 Board members, there are 29 alternate members, 25 representatives accredited by the staff pension committees of member organizations, and 6 representatives of FAFICS, along with observers and the secretaries of the staff pension committees. Representatives of the staff pension committees and FAFICS enjoy all the rights of Board members except the right to vote. It is worth noting that there was no evidence of any decision having been made by the Board by vote in the past five years. Since the Board has been making its decisions by consensus, the non-voting members wield virtually the same powers as voting members. Also, alternate members are allowed to attend the Board's sessions, even when their respective primary members are in attendance. Therefore, it appears that the Board's decisions are made by not just 33 members with voting rights, but by 93 "de facto members" (33 Board members, 29 alternates, 25 staff pension committees representatives, 4 FAFICS representatives and 2 FAFICS alternates) even though the Fund's rules of procedure state that Board decisions shall be taken by a majority of the members present and voting.

D. Representation of Fund participants and beneficiaries on the Board

1. Representation of participants

13. The size of the Board has increased over the years, from 12 members in 1949 to 33 in 1987. By its resolution 42/222 of 21 December 1987, the General Assembly approved a 33-member Board comprising 12 members appointed by the United Nations and 21 members appointed by other member organizations. When that was implemented with effect from 1 January 1989, the United Nations had 27,740 active participants (or 51 per cent of the total). In its resolutions 42/222, 46/192, 57/286, 59/269 and 61/240, the General Assembly has repeatedly emphasized the importance of the fair and equitable representation of participating organizations in the Board and its Standing Committee, to reflect the actual distribution of active participants in the Fund, present and future trends in Fund participation, and the changing nature of the Fund's member organizations.

14. Table 1 below shows the progressive increase in the number of active participants in the Fund, from 54,006 in 1988 to 128,262 in 2016.

Table 1
Number of Fund participants by member organization, 1988–2016

Member organization	*1988*	*1995*	*2002*	*2009*	*2016*
United Nations	27 740	44 059	56 287	82 576	87 111
ILO	3 098	2 823	2 863	3 642	3 706
FAO	6 909	5 735	5 447	6 011	10 318
UNESCO	2 908	2 561	2 437	2 602	2 412
WHO	5 887	6 125	8 181	11 029	10 724
IAEA	1 865	2 146	2 168	2 245	2 681
UNIDO	1 727	1 455	821	825	669
IOM	–	–	–	3 134	4 624
Others	3 872	3 804	4 511	5 516	6 017
Total	**54 006**	**68 708**	**82 715**	**117 580**	**128 262**

Abbreviations: FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency; ILO, International Labour Organization; IOM, International Organization for Migration; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization; WHO, World Health Organization.

15. The current representation of member organizations on the Board is shown in table 2 below.

Table 2
Representation of member organizations on the Board, as at 31 December 2016

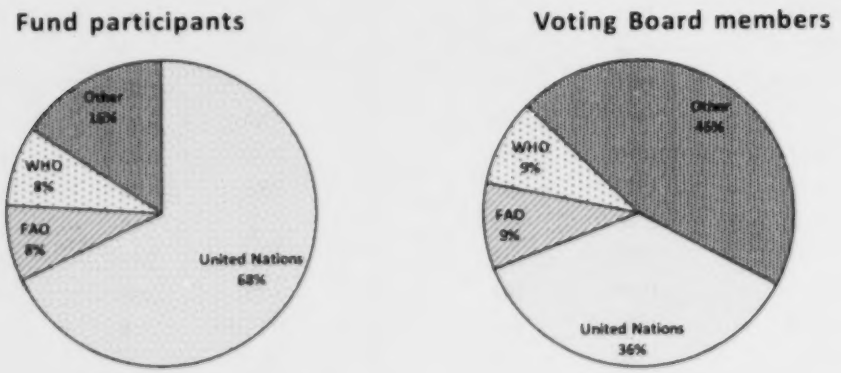
Member organization	*Year of admission*	*Number of participants*	*Number of Board seats (since 1988)*	*Percentage of total participants*	*Percentage of seats on the Board*	*Average number of participants represented by a Board member*
United Nations		87 111	12	67.92	36.36	7 259
WHO	1949	10 724	3	8.36	9.09	3 575
FAO	1950	10 318	3	8.04	9.09	3 439
ILO	1953	3 706	2	2.89	6.06	1 853
IAEA	1958	2 681	2	2.09	6.06	1 341
UNESCO	1951	2 412	2	1.88	6.06	1 206
IOM	2007	4 624	0	3.61	0	
WIPO	1977	1 225	2	0.96	6.06	613
ICC	2004	1 099	0	0.86	0	
ICAO	1951	798	2	0.62	6.06	399
ITU	1960	768	1	0.60	3.03	768
UNIDO	1986	669	1	0.52	3.03	669
IFAD	1977	595	1	0.46	3.03	595
STL	2009	462	0	0.36	0	
WMO	1952	351	1	0.27	3.03	351
IMO	1959	284	1	0.22	3.03	284
ICGEB	1996	168	0	0.13	0	
WTO	1996	91	0	0.07	0	
IPU	2005	47	0	0.04	0	
ITLOS	1997	39	0	0.03	0	
ICCROM	1981	37	0	0.03	0	
ISA	1998	35	0	0.03	0	
EPPO	1983	18	0	0.01	0	
Total		**128 262**	**33**	**100**	**100**	

Abbreviations: EPPO, European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organization; FAO, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations; IAEA, International Atomic Energy Agency; ICAO, International Civil Aviation Organization; ICC, International Criminal Court; ICCROM, International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property; ICGEB, International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology; IFAD, International Fund for Agricultural Development; ILO, International Labour Organization; IMO, International Maritime Organization; IOM, International Organization for Migration; IPU, Inter-Parliamentary Union; ISA, International Seabed Authority; ITLOS, International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea; ITU, International Telecommunication Union; STL, Special Tribunal for Lebanon; UNESCO, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization; UNIDO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization; WHO, World Health Organization; WIPO, World Intellectual Property Organization; WMO, World Meteorological Organization; WTO, World Trade Organization.

16. As at 31 December 2016, the number of active participants of the United Nations reached 87,111 (or 68 per cent of the total). However, United Nations representation on the Board (12 seats) was only 36 per cent of the voting members, as shown in the figure below. The Board's decision in 2004 that "any member organizations already with a seat on the Board should not lose that seat even if its participant population decreased over time" caused inequitable seat distribution among member

organizations. For example, the International Criminal Court has not had a seat on the Board since its admission to the Fund in 2004, even though it has a higher percentage of participants than six other member organizations with voting rights (namely, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the International Maritime Organization, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and the World Meteorological Organization). As shown in table 2 above, a Board member of the United Nations represents an average of 7,259 participants, whereas a Board member of the International Maritime Organization represents an average of 284 participants. Furthermore, there has been no Board member representing the 4,624 participants of the International Organization for Migration since its admission to the Fund in 2006.

Distribution of Fund participants and voting Board members, by member organization



17. In response to requests by the General Assembly, the Board has conducted reviews of its size and composition. In 2002, the Board recommended increasing its size from 33 members to 36, with the allocation of three additional seats to the United Nations. By resolution 57/286, the Assembly took note of the Board's report and requested it to study the representation of member organizations, so as to clarify the criteria adopted for that purpose, and to submit further proposals to the Assembly at its fifty-ninth session.

18. Some of the criteria adopted by the Board while conducting its reviews were not aligned with the principle of fair representation as emphasized by the General Assembly. For example, while the review conducted in 2004 stressed that the size of the Board should be truly representative of the membership of the Fund, it also advanced the argument that the Fund was a joint venture of organizations, rather than of participants or individuals. The Board's approach has resulted in the preservation of the status quo of 1987 and, since then, the proportion of active participants of the United Nations has further increased, from 51 per cent in 1988 to 68 per cent in 2016.

19. In its resolution 61/240, the General Assembly noted that the Board had recognized that its decision to retain its current size, composition and allocation of seats did not fully respond to Assembly resolution 57/286 with respect to achieving fairer representation. The Assembly also noted that the Board had agreed to review its size and composition after it had had adequate time to assess the results of its other decisions under that item. Since then, the Board has made no further proposal to address the obvious inequity in the representation of member organizations or the appropriateness of the Board's size.

Recommendation 2

The Board should: (a) implement the General Assembly's request to submit proposals for fair and equitable representation of member organizations on the Board to reflect the actual distribution of active participants in the Fund, present and future trends in Fund participation, and the changing nature of the Fund's member organizations; and (b) implement a rotation scheme that allows eligible member organizations to share the rotating seats in a fair and equitable manner.

Comments of the Board. The Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, did not accept the recommendation as currently formulated and indicated that it would establish a working group to consider issues of participation, rotation and fair and equitable representation, without any presumption of outcome and taking into account the Board's previous review on the matter.

Comments of OIOS. The formulation of the recommendation was based on the wording of General Assembly resolution 57/286. The audit showed that the Board's previous review had not addressed the matter to the satisfaction of the Assembly. OIOS therefore maintains that the Board should implement the General Assembly's request to submit proposals to achieve fair and equitable representation of member organizations on the Board.

2. Representation of beneficiaries

(a) Need for democratic representation of beneficiaries

20. Representatives of Fund beneficiaries do not have full member status on the Board or its Standing Committee. Under the Fund's rules of procedure, FAFICS has been accorded official status to represent beneficiaries at meetings of the Board and its Standing Committee with the same rights as members, except the right to vote.

21. In connection with a study on its size, the Board concluded in 2006 that beneficiaries should continue to be represented on the Board. In its resolution 61/240, the General Assembly took note of the Board's decision that the costs related to two beneficiary representatives attending the Board's sessions and one beneficiary representative attending the Standing Committee's meetings would be absorbed by the Board on a provisional basis until 2008, at which time the Board would consider means for duly electing beneficiary representatives. In 2007, the Chief Executive Officer presented a note to the Board on a possible process for electing beneficiary representatives. One of the scenarios was to conduct elections (similar to the annual worldwide elections of directors of the United Nations Federal Credit Union) through an experienced vendor at an estimated cost of $50,000 to $150,000 per election. A formal nomination process was explained, whereby beneficiaries would be asked to nominate candidates to represent them.

22. However, in the above-mentioned note, the Chief Executive Officer supported the continuation of the current arrangement of representation by FAFICS instead of through the direct election of beneficiary representatives on the grounds that holding elections would not necessarily result in a higher degree of retiree participation, and that the extent of their interest in such elections would be impossible to predict. OIOS is of the view that that was a speculative conclusion that was not based on any assessment or survey of beneficiary aspirations. With web-based tools, it is possible to ascertain whether beneficiaries prefer direct election of their representatives on the Board rather than the existing arrangement of limited, indirect representation through FAFICS. In 2008, after debating the issue, the Board deferred the subject and has

since maintained the status quo. FAFICS continues to sit on the Board in a non-voting capacity, even though it represents only 18,500 beneficiaries (approximately 25 per cent) of a total beneficiary population of 74,788 as at 31 December 2016.

23. Under a defined-benefit pension plan, beneficiaries are guaranteed their benefits, whereas active participants are exposed to a higher degree of uncertainty in relation to the pension fund's long-term financial health and sustainability. It is the participants, not the beneficiaries, who would have to bridge the funding gap if the pension fund anticipated significant deficits. Therefore, such pension plans must have a proportionately larger representation of active participants on the board than beneficiaries. Examples of governance structures of large public-sector, defined-benefit pension funds indicate that beneficiary representation is generally limited to one or two seats. OIOS is of the view that the Board needs to determine the appropriate number of seats to be allotted, with voting rights, to beneficiary representatives who are directly elected through a transparent and democratic process similar to that for participant representatives so that the elected individuals are accountable to beneficiaries and fully represent their interests on the Board.

Recommendation 3

The Board should determine the number of seats to be allotted to retiree representatives and facilitate their direct election as full Board members with voting rights to ensure transparent and democratic representation of beneficiaries and their interests.

Comments of the Board. The Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, did not accept the recommendation because this would undermine the tripartite nature of the Board and because retirees were unaffiliated with member organizations.

Comments of OIOS. OIOS is of the view that, in principle, the tripartite character of the Board is represented by governing bodies (the General Assembly in the case of the United Nations and similar governing bodies in the case of other member organizations), executive heads (the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the chief administrative officers of other member organizations), and the individuals who are dependent on the Fund (active participants and beneficiaries). The representatives of FAFICS currently exercise privileges comparable to participant representatives on the Board, except the right to vote, without being elected by the total beneficiary population to represent their interests. That anomaly should be corrected by ensuring transparent and democratic representation of beneficiaries on the Board against the seats allotted for them, with voting rights. In the opinion of OIOS, doing so would not alter the tripartite nature of the Board, but rather give due rights to beneficiary representatives, enhance the legitimacy of their representation at meetings of the Board and its committees and strengthen the accountability of representatives to the beneficiaries at large.

(b) Role of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants

24. FAFICS is a federation of 61 associations that currently represents approximately 25 per cent of all beneficiaries. It is governed by a council on which its member associations are represented. FAFICS appoints four representatives and two alternates to attend the Board's annual sessions as non-voting members. The Board's report for 2017 listed 10 FAFICS representatives (primary and alternate), who were either non-voting members of the Board or members of the Board's committees and/or working groups. The president of FAFICS was invited to attend 7 of 14 meetings held by the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee, even though

she was not a member of the Committee, whereas the same privilege has never been accorded to any other Board member or representative.

25. As noted in General Assembly resolution 61/240, in 2006, the Board decided that it would absorb the costs related to two retiree representatives attending the Board's sessions and one retiree representative attending the Standing Committee's meetings. However, budget documents for the two most recent bienniums (2016–2017 and 2018–2019) show that the expenses relating to the participation of six FAFICS representatives (four primary and two alternate) in each Board session have been absorbed by the Fund. There was no evidence that the Board's budget working group had raised questions about that discrepancy.

26. In its resolutions 70/248, 71/265 and 72/262 A, the General Assembly expressed concern at the delays in the receipt of benefits by some new beneficiaries. The reports of the Fund's internal and external auditors likewise raised concerns about delays, inefficiencies in pension processing, and understatement of the backlog as reported by the Fund secretariat. However, in a letter of January 2018 to beneficiaries, FAFICS stated that delays in pension processing were "largely a thing of the past", even though the Fund secretariat was able to process only 52 per cent of the initial separation cases in January 2018 within 15 days of receipt of all required documents, against the target of 75 per cent that had been set by the Board. Furthermore, the Fund acknowledged in March 2018 that some 15,000 workflows were pending because key separation documents were missing. The Board of Auditors recently concluded that there was an overall drop in the Fund's efficiency in processing benefits in 2017, with 703 fewer cases being processed in 2017 than in 2016.

27. In the same letter, FAFICS questioned the General Assembly's authority to undertake a governance review without prior discussion with the Board. It also stated that the Board had the "sole authority" for the appointment and reappointment of the Chief Executive Officer and that the Secretary-General had only the "administrative function to issue the contract". The Fund secretariat circulated that letter electronically to all registered beneficiaries, including the vast majority who were not members of FAFICS. The circulation of such a letter by the staff of the Chief Executive Officer gave the appearance of collusion between FAFICS and the Fund secretariat to challenge the authority of the Secretary-General and the General Assembly in governance matters of the Fund, even though the Chief Executive Officer was to be reappointed by the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the Board, and would ultimately be accountable to the Assembly. In a letter of February 2018, the outgoing president of a retiree association affiliated with FAFICS indicated to members of that association that the leadership of FAFICS "should be strongly reminded by its members that its task is to protect, defend and advance the rights of all United Nations retirees, not those of the Chief Executive Officer ...". That statement is consistent with complaints from other retirees that FAFICS was protecting the interests of the Chief Executive Officer instead of those of retirees.

28. Furthermore, on the basis of a proposal made by FAFICS in 2017, the Board approved an amendment to the rules of procedure and terms of reference for staff pension committees and their secretaries to allow two retiree representatives to attend the meetings of those committees, which are essentially forums for participants. That further increased the influence of FAFICS in the Fund's governance structure.

Recommendation 4

The Board should establish appropriate mechanisms to avoid conflicts of interest between representatives of FAFICS and the management of the Fund.

Comments of the Board. The Board stated that it would establish appropriate mechanisms to avoid conflict of interest between the management of the Fund and the constituent groups of the Board.

Comments of OIOS. OIOS is of the view that, as discussed in section V of the present report, the larger issue of conflict of interest and the lack of checks and balances between the management of the Fund and the Board should be addressed by separating the Board secretariat and the management of the Fund, as indicated in recommendation 8. The specific issue concerning the conflict of interest relating to FAFICS representatives and the management of the Fund needs to be addressed by ensuring that the management of the Fund regulates the travel costs relating to FAFICS representatives in accordance with legislative decisions. The issue relating to accountability of beneficiary representatives to their constituents would be addressed by the implementation of recommendation 3. However, the Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, has declined to accept both recommendations 3 and 8.

E. Frequency of Board meetings

29. According to the Fund's rules of procedure, the Board shall meet in regular session not less frequently than once every two years. Prior to 2006, the Board met biennially for a period of approximately 7 to 8 working days in even-numbered years. The Standing Committee, which is smaller in size (15 members) and has the authority to act on behalf of the Board when the latter is not in session, usually met for 4 to 5 days in odd-numbered years. In 2006, the Board decided to convert to annual sessions. Since then, the Board has been meeting for 5 working days in odd-numbered years and 7 working days in even-numbered years. The Standing Committee has also been meeting during each annual session of the Board for one day, primarily to deal with appeals.

30. The current term of office for members of the Board and its Standing Committee is one year; they are selected every year at the beginning of each Board session from among the staff pension committee representatives and they remain in office only until the next Board session. Although some are members of both the Committee and the Board, not all Committee members are Board members. The Chairs of the Board and its Standing Committee are different individuals.

31. Before the Board's annual session, information from various sources is presented to Board members usually two weeks prior to the session, or later. For example, in 2017, 1,944 pages of information relating to 39 agenda items were presented to the Board in the form of 47 documents and 16 presentations. Neither the Board nor its Standing Committee receives periodic reports or updates from the Board's other committees (such as the Audit Committee or the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee, which usually meets several times each year) or from the Fund secretariat. Neither the Board nor its Standing Committee has had any meetings between the annual sessions, except for one virtual meeting of the Standing Committee in 2017. The combination of one-year terms for the Chairs of the Board and its Standing Committee, their discrete composition, the absence of a common Chair, and the lack of ongoing oversight over the Fund's operations does not represent the best arrangement for providing effective governance of the Fund.

32. The Board's sessions are held annually, with a large number of individuals in attendance. Increasing the frequency of Board meetings would, therefore, entail significant additional expenditure. The need for appropriate oversight of the Fund's operations could be met by empowering the Standing Committee to meet more frequently on the Board's behalf between its annual sessions, through video/teleconferencing to minimize costs. Doing so would also help to reduce the burden on the Board's annual sessions and enable Board members to take the time necessary to study the sizeable volume of documents presented to them a few days or weeks before the annual sessions. The Board could identify the specific subjects to be delegated to the Standing Committee for that purpose to ensure that the Board's own authority to make decisions on major policy issues is not compromised or diluted.

Recommendation 5

The Board should strengthen its governance of the Fund by: (a) increasing the frequency of meetings of the Standing Committee to provide more effective oversight of the Fund's operations; (b) entrusting the Standing Committee to act on the Board's behalf during periods when the Board is not in session; and (c) requiring the Board's other committees and the secretariat of the Fund to periodically submit their reports to the Standing Committee for better oversight and to reduce the burden on the Board's annual sessions.

Comments of the Board. The Board stated that it has taken note of the recommendation and wished to point out that section B of the rules of procedure defines the role of the Standing Committee, and that the possibility of increased frequency of meetings as necessary or when requested by the Board was already foreseen in rule B.4.

Comments of OIOS. OIOS notes that the increased frequency of the Standing Committee's meetings on behalf of the Board, as already provided for in the Fund's regulations and rules, has not been exercised to provide more effective oversight of the Fund's operations. That significant weakness in the Board's governance needs to be addressed by ensuring that the Standing Committee meets more frequently and acts on behalf of the Board during periods when the Board is not in session.

F. Role of the United Nations Appeals Tribunal

33. Article 48 of the Fund's regulations states that applications alleging non-observance of the regulations arising out of decisions of the Board may be submitted directly to the United Nations Appeals Tribunal. In the event of a dispute as to whether the Tribunal has competence, the matter shall be settled by a decision of the Tribunal. The decision of the Tribunal shall be final and without appeal. However, in a note of 13 February 2018 to the United Nations Staff Pension Committee, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer informed the Committee that the "Board, not the Tribunal, has sole authority to interpret the Fund's regulations ... therefore, the [Tribunal's] judgments cannot provide any basis for reversing the decisions of the [Board], which concern the governance and administration of the Fund ...".

34. OIOS is of the opinion that the note by the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer mischaracterizes and diminishes the role of the Tribunal on the incorrect premise that the Board has "sole authority" to interpret the Fund's regulations and rules. As part of the governance structure, the role of the Tribunal is to ensure fairness and act as a check on arbitrary actions of the Board and the Fund secretariat. Although the Board has the authority to propose to the General Assembly appropriate amendments to the

Fund's regulations and rules to bridge gaps in law arising from the Tribunal's judgments and/or interpretations, such amendments cannot be premised on the notion that the Board enjoys supremacy over the Tribunal, its jurisdiction and its jurisprudence. Doing so, or creating a perception to that effect, would set a tone that shows lack of commitment to the principles of justice and fairness in the Fund. The Board cannot operate arbitrarily, free from judicial review.

III. Committees of the Board

A. Standing Committee

35. At each regular session, the Board appoints the members of its Standing Committee, which is to act on the Board's behalf when it is not in session. The Committee shall decide individual cases referred to it, exercise general control over the Fund's operations, and may initiate preparatory work on any policy questions to enable their effective consideration by the Board.

36. Since 2006, the Standing Committee only met during each annual session of the Board for one day, primarily to deal with appeal cases, with one exception in June 2017. It was not acting on behalf of the Board when the Board is not in session. Instead, functions that should have been performed by the Committee, such as evaluating the performance of the Chief Executive Officer and conducting the search for the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, were performed by ad hoc groups that, unlike the Standing Committee, did not have broad representation of the Board's constituent groups.

37. In the context of recommendation 5 above, the rules of procedure governing the full operation of the Standing Committee on behalf of the Board between the Board's annual sessions need to be clarified so that important matters are entrusted to the Committee acting on behalf of the Board, rather than to ad hoc groups.

B. Staff pension committees

38. Staff pension committees and their secretariats service the needs of participants from their respective organizations and provide the Fund secretariat with the required information pertaining to staff member participation in the Fund and their separation from service. The Fund secretariat provides central secretariat services to all staff pension committees (including the United Nations Staff Pension Committee) and local secretariat services to the United Nations as the secretariat of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee.

39. As noted in a previous OIOS audit report (2017/002), the Fund receives approximately $20 million per biennium from the United Nations for the staff pension committee secretariat services it provides. However, no metrics were defined to measure and monitor the Fund's performance of that function. The audit also showed that 11,128 pension cases were pending as of July 2016 owing to incomplete documentation. The Fund's stated position that the responsibility for missing documents rested with the member organizations was contrary to its quality management policy, which required the Fund to be more proactive in following up on such missing documents. The percentage of cases with missing documents pertaining to the United Nations Staff Pension Committee was 22 per cent, compared to 13 per cent for other staff pension committees. An OIOS recommendation that the Fund secretariat address those deficiencies is still being implemented.

40. Staff pension committees have the authority to review disability cases relating to their respective participants. There was a high volume of disability cases requiring

the attention of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee, whereas the staff pension committees of other member organizations mostly focused on governance matters owing to the low number of disability cases that required their review. The United Nations Staff Pension Committee has primarily reviewed disability cases, except for 2018 when participant representatives requested that policy matters be discussed in preparation for the Board's session. The exclusive focus on disability cases has not allowed that Committee to fully play its role in the Fund's governance. The Committee could mitigate that situation by meeting more frequently to allow adequate time to discuss policy issues concerning the Fund.

C. Committee of Actuaries

41. The Committee of Actuaries consists of five independent actuaries appointed by the Secretary-General for a three-year term upon the recommendation of the Board, subject to an overall limit of five terms. The function of the Committee is to advise the Board on actuarial questions arising from the Fund's operations. The Committee's terms of reference allow for the addition of ad hoc members for a term of two years. In 2006, two ad hoc members were added to the Committee in view of their special skills in asset liability management. In 2017, the Board, in view of the upcoming retirement of one member and the commencement of the final term of three others, approved the addition of two more ad hoc members.

42. The Committee meets once a year, and, since 2002, has held joint sessions with the Investments Committee every two years to maintain and enhance the link between the Fund's assets and liabilities, including by assessing the continued reasonableness and achievability of a real rate of return of 3.5 per cent. The Committee has consistently reported to the Board that its joint meetings with the Investments Committee have been effective in achieving that purpose.

D. Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee

43. In 2005, the then Chief Executive Officer proposed to establish an assets and liabilities monitoring committee to achieve more systematic and regular interaction between the Investments Committee and the Committee of Actuaries. The Standing Committee concluded that such a committee was unnecessary, considering that joint meetings of those two expert committees on assets and liabilities were already being held regularly. In 2007, the Chief Executive Officer proposed, inter alia, that he assume full responsibility for investment management. That proposal coincided with another joint proposal by the participant representatives and FAFICS that the Chief Executive Officer hire an independent investment adviser or create an additional investments committee under the Board. The Board did not approve those proposals because the Fund's existing governance set-up was considered adequate.

44. In 2012, the Board established a working group on sustainability to study measures to ensure the Fund's long-term sustainability. The working group recommended, inter alia, the establishment of a regular assets and liabilities monitoring committee, which was approved in 2013. Eight members were appointed to serve on the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee for a four-year term, renewable once.

45. From a governance perspective, mechanisms were already in place to monitor solvency risk or the balance between assets and liabilities, including joint meetings of the two expert committees, with actuarial evaluations and asset liability management studies being conducted every two and four years, respectively, alongside collaborative mechanisms established by the Fund for that purpose. The

creation of the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee duplicated those existing mechanisms. From a technical perspective, given the Fund's long-term investment horizon, well-funded status, negligible risk to liquidity and relatively stable pension liabilities, there was no need to manage or monitor solvency risk on a frequent, short-term basis.

46. Currently, no members of the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee have voting rights on the Board and four of its members are essentially outsiders. Since the majority of them are not investment experts, their work has required support from the Chief Executive Officer, the Representative of the Secretary-General for the investment of the assets of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, two members from each of the two expert committees, and the consulting actuary.

47. Article 19 of the Fund's regulations allows the Board to make "observations and suggestions" on the investment policy and examine investment accounts. However, the work of the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee has far exceeded the scope of article 19. It has essentially functioned as an oversight committee in respect of the Office of Investment Management through its extensive review of investment matters. Some of its observations and recommendations have been technically questionable and contradicted those of the Investments Committee. For instance, the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee has repeatedly suggested that the Office of Investment Management use more tactical asset allocation during a period, whereas the Investments Committee has advised otherwise. Coverage of liability topics by the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee has been limited and largely repeated the work of the Committee of Actuaries.

48. OIOS is of the opinion that there is no need for a permanent committee for asset liability monitoring owing to the Fund's strong long-term funding status and the effective governance mechanisms already in place for the same purpose. If necessary, the Board can include asset and liability management in its agenda and require the management of the Fund to provide assurances as needed.

Recommendation 6

The Board should retire its Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee and reinforce the interaction between the Committee of Actuaries and the Investments Committee to safeguard the Fund's long-term solvency.

Comments of the Board. The Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, did not accept the recommendation and decided to keep the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee to satisfy the purposes and objectives outlined in section 1, paragraph 2 of the Committee's terms of reference.

Comments of OIOS. OIOS notes that, pursuant to section 6, paragraph 9 of those terms of reference, the Board was to "review the experience" of the Committee at the Board's sixty-third session, in 2016. At the time of the audit, it was unclear whether that review had taken place. In the opinion of OIOS, such a review is required, without presumption of outcome, to determine the value added by the Committee to the Fund's governance.

E. Audit Committee

49. The Board established its Audit Committee in 2007 to assist in fulfilling its oversight responsibility. The Committee comprises nine members appointed by the Board, including two independent experts and a representative of FAFICS. The Committee has followed the good practice of performing self-evaluations.

Nonetheless, there are a number of areas where the Committee can strengthen its role and improve its effectiveness, as discussed below.

50. The Audit Committee needs to strengthen the criteria and procedures for the selection of its members. The Committee's selection procedures are informal, and there is no documented assessment as to whether the members nominated by the three constituent groups of the Board fulfil the criteria for membership as defined in the Committee's terms of reference. The Committee could benefit from considering the practice of the Independent Audit Advisory Committee of the General Assembly, whose members are selected from a pool of candidates after the respective Member States of origin have attested to their qualifications on the basis of pre-defined criteria.

51. In accordance with leading practices and trends, an audit committee should, inter alia, ensure the independence of its members, focus on the tone at the top and on culture and ethics, and provide oversight of compliance with the organization's code of ethics/conduct. Since 2008, the members of the Audit Committee have been complying with the requirement to file conflict of interest declarations before each meeting. However, in the absence of an independent secretariat for the committee, there has been no procedure to independently verify or evaluate those declarations. There have been instances where the Committee could have applied a higher standard in managing perceived conflict of interest situations relating to its members by exercising its own judgment instead of referring the matter to another office or resorting to recusals, which may not necessarily have been the best solution. Demonstration of adherence to a higher ethical standard by Committee members would strengthen its effectiveness and set an example for the Board and the Fund in establishing an ethical tone at the top.

52. In the opinion of OIOS, the Audit Committee needs to be more sceptical about the information and proposals provided to it by the Fund secretariat. For instance:

(a) In November 2014, the Board of Auditors stated that it was "taken aback" when it learned that the proposed amendments to article 14 of the Fund's regulations relating to external audit had been presented to the General Assembly without any consultation. Eventually, the amendments were rejected by the Assembly. That may have occurred owing to inadequate explanation to the Audit Committee of the rationale for the proposed amendments and confirmation that management had appropriately consulted with the Board of Auditors before proposing the changes.

(b) In 2016, the Audit Committee reviewed the fraud policy prepared by the Office of Investment Management but not the fraud policy of the Fund secretariat. The policy of the Fund secretariat requires the senior management of the Fund, including the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, to initiate the analysis of fraud-related concerns and determine the nature of any investigation and decide on the involvement of other offices or an independent fact finder. Unlike the policy prepared by the Office of Investment Management, the policy of the Fund secretariat lacks the safeguards necessary to protect staff who report fraud, which may discourage them from reporting fraud for fear of retaliation. That issue assumes significance in view of the three complaints of retaliation filed by Fund staff against the Fund secretariat, which the Ethics Office found to be substantiated.

(c) As explained further in the present report, the Chief Executive Officer accepted an award from a vendor in February 2016 and informed the Audit Committee about it. However, the Committee was not informed that acceptance of the award contravened the administrative instruction that requires that any honour, decoration, favour or gift from any individual or entity doing business with the Organization be declined or returned.

(d) The management of the Fund informed the Audit Committee in 2017 that the internal audit function (performed by OIOS) was rated as "high risk" in the Fund's risk register. Evidently, the Committee had not been informed that the Fund had engaged an accounting firm at a cost of $101,810 to review and update its risk register, and that there was no known deliverable produced by the firm that could be deemed to be an updated risk register. Seemingly on the basis of assertions by the management of the Fund, the Committee informed the Board that the non-acceptance of several audit recommendations suggested that management had lost confidence in OIOS. Furthermore, during its meeting in November 2017, the Committee concluded that the risk of not implementing recommendations that had not been accepted was not clear from the OIOS reports in question (2017/104 and 2017/110). OIOS is of the view that such conclusions may have come about owing to the Committee's reliance on management's assertions, without challenging them adequately to glean the facts.

Recommendation 7

The Board should, in consultation with its Audit Committee, strengthen the criteria for the Committee's membership, its independence and its means to hold the management of the Fund accountable for the accuracy and completeness of the information presented to it.

Comments of the Board. The Board accepted the recommendation.

IV. Management structure of the Fund

A. Overview

53. The Fund was created as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly by its resolution 248 (III) in 1948. The Fund's legal status remains unchanged with the admission of new member organizations. The General Assembly remains the Fund's supreme governing body and the United Nations remains its lead organization and host. Several mechanisms established since the Fund's inception continue to provide institutional linkages between the United Nations and the Fund, including the authority of the Secretary-General over the appointment of the Fund's Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer on the recommendation of Board, oversight by OIOS, the role of the Ethics Office, which reports directly to the Secretary-General, and the role of the secretariat of the Fund as the secretariat of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee. The Office of Investment Management, which manages the investment of the Fund's assets, is also under the authority of the Secretary-General. Therefore, the Fund is not entirely independent from the United Nations.

54. However, the Fund had repeatedly asserted otherwise. For example, in a 2014 report submitted to the Board, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer asserted, inter alia, that the Fund is an "inter-agency body" and that the Secretary-General, as the executive head of a member organization of the Fund, must respect that independence. Similarly, the Fund disputed the discretionary authority of the Secretary-General over the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer and maintained that the Secretary-General was required to necessarily accept the Board's recommendation and implement it.

55. OIOS is of the view that the Secretary-General has discretion over the appointment of the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer under Article 101 of the Charter of the United Nations, which requires the Secretary-

General to secure the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, which is the paramount consideration in the employment of staff. If the Secretary-General receives information from the offices that report to him, such as OIOS and the Ethics Office, that may cause him to believe that the principles of Article 101 of the Charter may be compromised by accepting the Board's recommendation to appoint or reappoint the Chief Executive Officer or Deputy Chief Executive Officer, the Secretary-General has the duty to act in a manner that upholds the principles of the Charter.

B. Secretariat of the Fund

56. The Fund secretariat is headed by the Chief Executive Officer, who is appointed by the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the Board and manages the secretariat under the authority of the Board. The Deputy Chief Executive Officer is similarly appointed. The secretariat is primarily responsible for pension administration, including the monitoring of actuarial valuations and contributions from member organizations and participants and the processing and payment of pension benefits. The secretariat also assists the Chief Executive Officer in his roles as Secretary of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee and of the Board. Internally, the secretariat provides administrative services in respect of human resources, travel and facilities management to the Office of Investment Management.

C. Office of Investment Management

57. The Office of Investment Management is responsible for managing the investment of the Fund's assets. Under the authority of the Secretary-General, the Representative of the Secretary-General for the investment of the assets of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund has a fiduciary responsibility to manage the investments in the best interests of participants and beneficiaries. The Office of Investment Management assists the Representative in fulfilling his or her responsibilities by: (a) executing the investment strategy in accordance with investment policies; and (b) monitoring, evaluating and reporting on asset allocation, investment performance, risk and compliance. Until the post of Representative became full time in 2014, the Office, at the time known as the Investment Management Division, had been headed by a representative, also designated by the Secretary-General, who worked on a part-time basis. The first full-time Representative was appointed in 2014 at the rank of Assistant Secretary-General.

V. Checks and balances between the Board and the management of the Fund

A. Dual role of the Fund's Chief Executive Officer

1. Best practices in governance

58. In its Internal Control Integrated Framework, the Committee of Sponsoring Organizations of the Treadway Commission defines the term "control environment", which refers to the set of standards, processes and structures that provide the basis for internal control across an organization. The control environment is also the overall culture, tone and attitude of an organization. As indicated in the Framework, one of the principles of the control environment requires that a board demonstrate independence from management and that it exercise oversight over the development and performance of internal control functions. In accordance with best practices for

good governance, it is recommended that the same person not be appointed as the Chief Executive Officer and Secretary because the responsibilities of those positions may conflict with each other.

2. Established practice in the Fund

59. Article 7 of the Fund's regulations states that the Chief Executive Officer of the Fund shall also serve as the Secretary of the Board. All sessions of the Board are convened by the Secretary, who also places on the agenda the items proposed by any Board member or staff pension committee. All documents are presented to the Board with a note by the Secretary, who is also responsible for preparing the Board's reports. The records and correspondence of the Board are private and kept in the care of the Secretary.

60. The substantial authority given to the Chief Executive Officer as the Board's Secretary poses significant risks to the objectivity of the Chief Executive Officer and inhibits the "arm's length principle" in dealings with the Board, in particular with regard to accountability for the Fund's operations as its Chief Executive Officer. The review conducted by OIOS showed that performance of the roles of Secretary and Chief Executive Officer by the same individual is not a sound governance practice, as illustrated by the following examples:

(a) The Secretary reviews the survey questions for the Board's self-evaluation and controls the compilation and distribution of its results. That arrangement poses a conflict because the Board is responsible for assessing the performance of the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer.

(b) The Fund established a quality management policy in 2002–2003 as a key component of the management charter that had been presented to the Standing Committee in 2001. The policy contained important metrics to measure the performance of the Chief Executive Officer and to hold him or her accountable for the quality of service provided to participants and beneficiaries. In March 2017, the Chief Executive Officer abolished the policy without the approval of the Board or the Standing Committee, thereby compromising the accountability of the Chief Executive Officer to the Board.

(c) The Chief Executive Officer controls the performance evaluations and promotions of all staff who provide secretariat support to the Board's committees. That arrangement could interfere with their independence and compromise the confidentiality of committee deliberations, in particular those of their closed/private sessions.

(d) The dual role of Secretary/Chief Executive Officer has enabled the incumbent to conceive and present proposals to the Board that have sought to alter the Fund's governance. In 2007, one of those proposals was to end the Fund's bifurcated structure by creating one unified operational entity under the authority of the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer. The Board did not accept the proposal. In 2012, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer attempted to obtain the power to amend the Fund's administrative rules, but the Board did not agree. In 2014, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer tried to restrict the authority of the Board of Auditors by proposing an amendment to article 14 (b) of the Fund's regulations that was endorsed by the Board but was not approved by the General Assembly. Had the secretariat of the Board been independent from the management of the Fund, the Chief Executive Officer's proposals would have been scrutinized and appropriately challenged before being presented to the Board.

(e) In 2013, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer established a project on human resources management and appointed a Board member as the project leader in

a personal capacity on a pro bono basis. Although that individual was not eligible for business class travel and a daily subsistence allowance at the special rate of 140 per cent, the Chief Executive Officer approved that deviation from the rules. The Board member reported to the Chief Executive Officer during the project. Later, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer presented a report to the Board regarding the project. In appointing that Board member as project leader, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer compromised the principle of management maintaining an arm's length from the Board.

(f) The Secretary/Chief Executive Officer had presented incorrect and incomplete information to the Board and the General Assembly on the actual status of the Fund's Executive Office, which was unilaterally dissolved by the Chief Executive Officer in June 2015. The Chief Executive Officer moved the Executive Officer and an Administrative Officer to another office at United Nations Headquarters and distributed their functions internally. The dissolution was not reflected in the Board's report to the General Assembly. The salaries and allowances of the two staff members, which OIOS estimated at $2.4 million for the period July 2015 to April 2018, continued to be paid by the Fund even though they had ceased working for the Fund in June 2015. That fact was not disclosed to the Board. The disbanding of the Executive Office impacted the operations of the Office of Investment Management and led to unnecessary expenditures on unutilized office space and a failure to recover the landlord's share of renovation costs amounting to $923,880 for more than two years, as previously noted in an OIOS report (2018/002). The loss from the Fund secretariat's failure to initiate the recovery is estimated at between $100,000 to $220,000 as of May 2018.

(g) In 2016, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer presented a report to the Board on a post-implementation review of the Integrated Pension Administration System, a project for which the Chief Executive Officer was responsible. The report was prepared by a consulting firm hired by the Chief Executive Officer at a cost of $291,200 by improperly utilizing a contract for accounting services (see OIOS report 2017/110). On the basis of the consulting firm's report, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer reported to the Board that the implementation of the Integrated Pension Administration System had been successful. Accordingly, the Board reported the project's success to the General Assembly, which the Assembly welcomed in its resolution 71/265. A subsequent audit by the Board of Auditors found several issues relating to the Integrated Pension Administration System, including anomalies in the data provided to the Fund's actuaries that led to an unreliable actuarial valuation. In its resolution 72/262 A, the Assembly noted with serious concern the shortcomings in the implementation of the Integrated Pension Administration System and requested the Board to address them. In that instance, the Chief Executive Officer exercised his authority to hire a vendor, who may have lacked independence and objectivity owing to the conflict of interest inherent in such a relationship, to prepare the report and then exercised his authority as Secretary to present it to the Board.

(h) In June 2018, the Secretary/Chief Executive Officer proposed to amend the Fund's regulations by adding a new article 4 (c) as follows: "The Board shall adopt its own Rules of Procedure which shall be reported to the General Assembly and the member organizations". Such an amendment was unnecessary because rule A.5 of the Board's rules of procedure already states that "subject to the provisions of the Regulations and of these Rules, the Board shall adopt its own procedures". The proposed addition of a new article 4 (c) that omitted the words "subject to the provisions of the Regulations and these Rules" raises questions about the rationale for such an amendment.

61. The above conditions strongly indicate that the combination of the roles of Secretary to the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Fund in one individual

significantly compromises checks and balances. It fails to ensure the accountability of the Chief Executive Officer to the Board because too much authority is concentrated in the same individual who, as Secretary, controls the information provided to the Board, including its content and accuracy. Since the Board meets only once a year, the submission of bulky documents to its members just a few days or weeks before the Board's annual sessions does not permit their independent vetting and scrutiny. The separation of the two roles would require the Chief Executive Officer to submit proposals or documents to the Secretary for the latter's independent review before presentation to the Board for consideration.

62. Such a separation of roles would require the creation of an independent secretariat for the Board to serve the Board and its committees on a full-time basis. OIOS is of the view that any additional costs arising from such an arrangement would be outweighed by the benefits, which would include strengthening the accountability of the Chief Executive Officer to the Board and increasing the focus of the Chief Executive Officer on improving the quality of services delivered to the Fund's stakeholders.

Recommendation 8

The Board should: (a) separate the roles of its Secretary and the Fund's Chief Executive Officer; (b) establish its own secretariat that is independent from the management of the Fund; and (c) reconstitute the Executive Office such that it is directly responsible to both entities of the Fund for the provision of administrative services.

Comments of the Board. The Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, did not accept recommendations 8 (a) and (b). The Board stated that it would establish mechanisms for ensuring proper segregation of roles, such as in relation to the setting of the Board's agenda. The Board accepted recommendation 8 (c), stating that it would request the management of the Fund to resolve that issue as a matter of priority.

Comments of OIOS. OIOS maintains that the separation of roles of the Board's Secretary and the Fund's Chief Executive Officer is of critical importance to preventing role conflicts, providing for the required checks and balances, and promoting the accountability of Fund management to the Board.

B. Performance management and accountability

63. Performance management and accountability is a critical component of good governance. The pension industry uses two major categories of indicators to measure pension administration performance: quality of service (effectiveness) and cost per participant (efficiency).

1. Performance management in the Fund secretariat

(a) Strategic objectives, priorities and performance indicators

64. The strategic objectives and priorities of the Fund secretariat have often been abstract, with no clear deliverables or measurable performance indicators linked to its core services. Those issues have been noted in previous OIOS audits reports, including 2017/002, in which control weaknesses in relation to pension processing, including timely processing and follow-up on missing separation documents, were identified. As of the drafting of the present report, the implementation of most of the audit recommendations in that report was still under way.

(b) Performance reporting

65. There was significant underreporting of performance issues relating to the Fund secretariat. For instance, it was only in January 2018 that the Fund reported more than 15,000 cases as being outstanding owing to various reasons. That was more than two years after the Fund had reported the successful implementation of the Integrated Pension Administration System. Until then, the Fund had reported only some 3,000 cases as backlog, which represented cases where all three documents required for pension processing had been received. The Fund had not reported the 15,000 cases in question on the grounds that it was not responsible for them until all three documents had been received. The Fund was not following up on the missing documents even though the Integrated Pension Administration System had an automated feature to trigger automatic reminders. Moreover, pursuant to its quality management policy, the Fund has the responsibility to proactively pursue missing documents to mitigate the hardship caused to unpaid beneficiaries.

66. Although the Fund has been computing and reporting the cost per participant since 2012, it has not formally adopted that as a performance indicator. In 2015, the then Chair of the Board pointed to the relevance of that indicator while presenting the Fund's proposed budget for 2016–2017 to the General Assembly, projecting that the Fund's cost per participant for 2018–2019 would fall to the 2006 level following the efficiency gains brought about by the implementation of the Integrated Pension Administration System. The Fund's methodology for calculating the cost per participant excluded the portion of the Fund's administrative costs borne by the United Nations, despite the inseparability of the staff pension committee secretariat role from the Fund's operations. The actual cost per participant would be much higher if those costs were included: $233 for 2017, as compared with the $184 calculated by the Fund. Furthermore, the cost per participant projected by the Fund for 2018 ($192) is 28 per cent higher than that for 2006 ($150). The Fund secretariat has yet to conduct a benchmarking exercise to determine the reasonableness of its costs.

(c) Performance evaluation of the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer

67. In 2013, the Board decided that its "bureau" would evaluate the performance of the Chief Executive Officer every two years with reference to the Fund's strategic objectives. In 2016, the "bureau" conducted the evaluation for the 2014–15 cycle. OIOS considers that evaluation to be inadequate because: (a) the performance of the Chief Executive Officer was not measured on the basis of clear deliverables and indicators; (b) the quality of core services, operational efficiency and the implementation of critical projects were not prioritized; and (c) the performance of the Chief Executive Officer as Secretary of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee was not assessed. The evaluation relied significantly on a self-appraisal submitted by the Chief Executive Officer, which understated performance issues, such as delays in benefit processing, and overstated achievements, such as the implementation of the Integrated Pension Administration System.

68. The performance of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer has never been evaluated. During its 2017 session, the Board did not discuss the reappointment of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, nor did it initiate a search process for a successor, even though it was known that the first term of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer would expire in 2018.

(d) Performance evaluation of staff

69. The Board of Auditors reported that, in May 2014, 46 per cent of the Fund's staff had not completed their performance appraisals for the 2012–13 cycle, and

47 per cent of staff members had been awarded salary increments without proper performance evaluation for the year. The Fund accepted the Board's recommendation to effectively monitor and oversee the performance evaluation process and to hold all managers and supervisors accountable. However, OIOS noted that the completion rate of performance evaluations by Fund staff has since deteriorated. As of April 2018, 43 per cent of staff in the Fund secretariat (and more than 80 per cent in two sections) had not completed their performance evaluations for the 2016–17 cycle. Also, there were several cases where the roles of first and second reporting officers were being performed by the same supervisor, which weakened checks and balances in managing the performance of staff.

2. Performance management in the Office of Investment Management

70. The Office of Investment Management has consistently defined its strategic objective as achieving a long-term actuarial real rate of return of 3.5 per cent. The Office has also measured and reported its performance against its policy benchmark, which has been regularly published on the Fund's website. The Representative of the Secretary-General for the investment of the assets of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund has signed a performance agreement with the Secretary-General every year, with performance being evaluated accordingly. Those performance indicators cascaded down to Office managers and staff. The performance evaluation completion rate of Office staff was 86 per cent for the 2013–14 cycle, and increased to 99 per cent for the 2016–17 cycle. The Office also conducted two benchmarking studies, in 2012 and 2017.

Recommendation 9

The Board should: (a) establish mechanisms to ensure that annual performance evaluations of the Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer are conducted and documented based on clear metrics to hold them accountable; and (b) ensure that the secretariat of the Fund is held accountable for annually appraising the performance of its staff.

Comments of the Board. The Board accepted the recommendation.

C. Control environment

1. Best practices in governance

71. As indicated in paragraph 58 above, pursuant to the Internal Control Integrated Framework, the Board is ultimately responsible for creating an effective control environment by providing oversight and setting the tone for integrity and ethical values.

2. Culture, tone and attitude of the organization

(a) Transparency and accountability

72. Transparency is regarded as a key feature of good governance and a precondition for accountability. The Board currently places restrictions on the distribution of its documents. Its handbook states that all documents for meetings of the Board, the Standing Committee and staff pension committees are restricted and confidential. Members of the Board and its committees sign a declaration that requires them to maintain the confidentiality of all non-public information entrusted to them or otherwise obtained by them in the discharge of their responsibilities. The confidentiality requirement precludes Board members from obtaining any

independent advice, in good faith, from others who may have the expertise required to suitably apprise them of the implications of proposals before the Board and the potential consequences of its decisions in that regard. OIOS is of the view that many of the restricted documents are, in fact, not confidential in nature and should be made available to Fund stakeholders, who may not be assured of accountability if the required transparency and access to information are absent.

73. The Fund secretariat has repeatedly resorted to the practice of proposing amendments to the Fund's regulations and rules without consulting or even informing the stakeholders concerned within the Fund's governance structure who would be impacted by such amendments. That practice raises serious doubts about its commitment to transparency and fairness, as well as the underlying motives in adopting such an opaque approach while altering the Fund's regulatory framework. The situation is facilitated by the performance of the functions of Secretary of the Board and Chief Executive Officer of the Fund by the same individual.

(b) Independence and impartiality

74. In February 2016, the Chief Executive Officer accepted an award from a vendor with whom the Fund had established a contract for basic services. The contract was entered into in March 2012 by the former Chief Executive Officer against the advice of the Headquarters Committee on Contracts, which resulted in the rejection of the lowest-cost acceptable proposal and an additional commitment of $1 million (see OIOS report 2016/136). The current Chief Executive Officer, who was the Fund's Deputy Chief Executive Officer when the Fund entered into that contract in 2012, had worked for the same vendor prior to being appointed to the Fund. In his self-evaluation in 2016, the Chief Executive Officer highlighted the award presented by the vendor as a significant achievement.

75. Acceptance of the award from the vendor contravened the administrative instruction that requires that any honour, decoration, favour or gift from any individual or entity doing business with or seeking to do business with the Organization be promptly declined and returned. The Fund secretariat explained that it had reported the receipt of the award to the Board and the Audit Committee, which did not provide any advice or suggestions in that regard but rather acknowledged the achievement. OIOS is of the view that such an endorsement does not set the appropriate tone as to the standards of conduct expected of the management and staff of the Fund.

(c) Integrity and ethical values

76. In accordance with the principles relating to the control environment set out in the Internal Control Integrated Framework, organizations must demonstrate a commitment to integrity and ethical values. However, OIOS has come across a number of instances where the Fund secretariat may have failed to do so. For example, the Chief Executive Officer did not intervene to prevent conflict of interest in recruiting a senior manager who was both a candidate for a post and involved in correspondence relating to the post's classification. In another instance, a senior manager copied a staff member in an email that contained assessment questions in relation to a post for which the latter had applied. In both cases, the Fund secretariat proceeded to select those staff members for the posts.

77. The current Chief Information Officer of the Fund serves as Vice-Chair of the management committee of a United Nations agency that provides services to several United Nations entities, including the Fund. The management committee decides the agency's catalogue of services and the rates to be charged for them. As Chief Information Officer, that individual directly supervises the requisitioning of services

from the agency, currently amounting to $7 million per year. The Chief Information Officer is a former OIOS staff member who, in 2009, had supervised an OIOS audit of services provided by the agency to several United Nations entities, including the Fund. That audit gave rise to a recommendation in which a department of the United Nations Secretariat (Department A) was asked to determine and recover overpayments made to the agency for services not requested or not delivered. Department A recently indicated that it had withheld payments of approximately $5 million to the agency, pending resolution of the disputed charges. Department A further stated that the agency had recently requested the Chief Information Officer to assist as an intermediary to review and advise both parties on how to resolve the dispute. The combination of roles performed by a single individual — as the OIOS auditor who made the recommendation to Department A, as the Chief Information Officer and requisitioner of services from the agency on behalf of the Fund, as Vice-Chair of the agency's management committee, and now as intermediary in the dispute involving Department A that that individual had previously audited and the agency — gives rise to multiple conflicts of interest that could impair that individual's independence and impartiality.

78. Information provided to OIOS indicates that three complaints have been filed by Fund staff alleging retaliation by the Fund secretariat. The Ethics Office has determined that retaliation was established in all three cases. Those instances point to the need for the Board to restore confidence among staff and promote ethical conduct without fear of reprisal.

Recommendation 10

The Board should take effective measures to ensure that the secretariat of the Fund sets the appropriate tone at the top with regard to integrity and ethical values.

Comments of the Board. The Board accepted the recommendation.

3. Organizational structure

(a) Resource distribution

79. An OIOS review of resource distribution over the course of seven bienniums, from 2004–2005 to 2016–2017, showed that the Fund secretariat had used more resources for support functions than for its programme of work. According to industry standards, functions relating to legal, policy interpretation, actuarial valuation and risk management are all considered support services. On that basis resource distribution for the programme of work and for programme support for the 2016–2017 biennium were 46 per cent and 48 per cent, respectively, which would seem to indicate a prioritization of support functions over programme activities.

80. The number of established P-5 and D-1 posts in programme support, including in the Risk Management and Legal Services Section, which was created in 2014, increased by 250 per cent from the periods 2004–2005 to 2016–2017. The number of established posts in the Professional category for legal officers increased by 500 per cent between 2004–2005 and 2016–2017, representing the largest increase among all functions and sections in the Fund secretariat.

(b) Combination of diverse functions under the Risk Management and Legal Services Section

81. Prior to 2014, the risk management function had a direct reporting line to the Chief Executive Officer. With the new structure in place since 2014, Fund secretariat risk officers have reported to the Chief of the Risk Management and Legal Services Section. The post of Chief of the Risk Management and Legal Services Section was approved at the D-1 level after several unsuccessful attempts by the Chief Executive Officer over three consecutive bienniums to either create a new D-1 post or to reclassify an existing P-5 post in the Legal Section to the D-1 level. Given that the main responsibility of the incumbent is to direct, manage and provide guidance for all services under the Risk Management and Legal Services Section (including actuarial valuation and risk management), it is unclear whether that is being achieved effectively given that the incumbent's background is predominantly in legal services. The Chief Executive Officer's rationale for creating the Section was that it would "enhance the Fund's ability to understand and oversee key solvency issues and provide adequate and professional integrated analysis for informed decision-making at the legislative and managerial levels." Those functions require specialized knowledge and skills that are distinct from the skill set needed to provide legal services. The consolidation of diverse, specialized functions within the Section, whose head is essentially a legal officer, may not be desirable from a governance standpoint and could lead to the application of a legal perspective to non-legal functions. That has been evident from the Fund's responses to oversight reports, which have been prepared for the Chief Executive Officer by the Section, which takes a distinctly legalistic approach towards risk and control, rather than a managerial one.

(c) Questionable use of temporary resources

82. In June 2016, the Fund hired a senior officer at the P-5 level on a temporary basis to support its strategy for public communication. In July 2016, the Fund requested a regular P-5 post for that function, but that request was rejected by the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. In 2017, the Fund secretariat requested the same post again, with a slight change in title. The Advisory Committee rejected the request again, stating that "the focus of the Pension Fund should be primarily on improving its operations". Despite the advice of the Advisory Committee in 2016 and 2017, which was endorsed by the General Assembly, the Fund secretariat continued to fund the post through general temporary assistance resources that had been provided for other purposes. Similarly, in 2015, the Fund secretariat requested the reclassification of a programme officer post from the P-4 level to the P-5 level, which was rejected by the Advisory Committee. Despite that rejection, the Fund hired a staff member for that function using general temporary assistance resources that had been provided for other purposes. Also, since May 2015, the Fund secretariat has employed a senior manager at the D-1 level on a temporary basis to support its administrative functions. However, resources for that post had never been requested or approved. OIOS is of the view that such circumvention or overriding of legislative decisions by the Fund secretariat does not set the appropriate tone for Fund staff.

Recommendation 11

The Board should: (a) determine the appropriateness of the distribution of resources between programme and support functions; and (b) strengthen monitoring to ensure that the secretariat of the Fund utilizes resources in accordance with legislative decisions.

Comments of the Board. The Board accepted the recommendation, noting that it related to a long-standing practice of the Board, and that it would continue that practice and perform its functions in monitoring the use and distribution of resources as a matter of priority.

Comments of OIOS. OIOS is of the view that the Board needs to ensure the effective monitoring of the distribution and use of resources by the secretariat of the Fund.

4. Search panel for the Deputy Chief Executive Officer

(a) Shortcomings in the search process

83. In February 2018, the Board's Chair established an ad-hoc Deputy Chief Executive Officer search panel, comprising 8 members, to fill the upcoming vacancy arising from the incumbent's decision to separate from the Organization on 30 June 2018. The Chair asked the spokespersons of the three constituent groups and FAFICS to coordinate the nomination of two representatives from their groups to the search panel. Some Board members representing the United Nations objected to that approach and requested that the rules of procedure be followed by convening the Standing Committee (which should act on the Board's behalf when the Board is not in session) to oversee the search panel's work, related procedures for which had been previously accepted by the Board in 2004. However, the Chair of the Standing Committee declined to convene the Committee, stating that the request should have come from the staff pension committees, not from individuals. There was no evidence that the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, who was acting as the Secretary of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee and as Secretary of the Board and of the Standing Committee, made such a request to the Standing Committee.

84. In a note to the Board in 2004, the Chief Executive Officer had summarized the procedures that had been followed in 1998 for the same purpose and emphasized the establishment of selection procedures that could also be used in the future. Accordingly, at that time, the Board decided to use the same procedures that had been used in 1998. It authorized the Standing Committee to appoint a search group and requested the Board's Secretary to circulate a draft job description and vacancy announcement to the staff pension committees and Board members for comments before they were finalized by the Standing Committee. However, for the 2018 search for Deputy Chief Executive Officer (which was ongoing at the time of the audit), the vacancy announcement was prepared by the search panel without having been circulated to the staff pension committees, the Standing Committee or Board members. After the post was advertised, some Board members raised concerns that the Deputy Chief Executive Officer's duties relating to the individual's dual role as the Deputy Secretary of the United Nations Staff Pension Committee were missing from the vacancy announcement.

85. Apart from the procedural deviations indicated above, OIOS has additional concerns relating to the search panel, as follows:

(a) During previous searches for Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer, the secretary/rapporteur of each search panel had been independent and free of any apparent conflict of interest. In the present case, however, according to information known to OIOS, a P-4 level staff member of the Fund secretariat has been assigned that role, which raises concern because some senior managers of the Fund may be candidates for the post. Given the staff member's junior level in the Fund's hierarchy, the integrity of the process may be compromised by the potential conflict of interest in the staff member's role as secretary of the search panel.

(b) The vacancy announcement issued by the Office of Human Resources Management on 2 March 2018 contained an additional section titled "salary and benefits" (which is not normally found in such announcements), which indicated a net annual salary of $108,189 after staff assessment. It also provided a web link to a page that gave information on United Nations system salaries and benefits. Even though the Office of Human Resources Management defines "salary" as comprising two elements (base salary and post adjustment), the figure of $108,189 did not include the annual post adjustment amounting to $72,378. External candidates had to delve through layers of information to ascertain the actual salary for the post, whereas such basic information should have been available upfront, as was done with the vacancy announcement for the post of Chief Executive Officer that had been issued in September 2011, which indicated a net annual salary inclusive of post adjustment. The provision of incomplete information on such an important condition of service may be seen as an unfair practice aimed to provide an advantage to internal candidates.

86. The search process has been mired in controversy and disagreement among Board members and members of the Standing Committee, which does not reflect favourably on the Fund from a governance perspective. The deviations from established procedures, combined with the appearance of arbitrariness and conflict of interest, raise questions about fairness and may undermine the credibility of the selected candidate.

Recommendation 12

The Board should assess the composition and procedures of the search panel for the Deputy Chief Executive Officer in the light of the deviations in and apparent arbitrariness of the process and determine whether the search should be restarted to ensure integrity and fairness in a competitive exercise.

Comments of the Board. The Board did not accept the recommendation as currently formulated. The Board stated that it had assessed the composition and the procedures of the search panel, which had been formulated during the intersessional period, considered them to be appropriate and therefore proceeded with the recommendation to the Secretary-General for the selection of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. The Board noted that it would reflect on lessons learned for future search panels.

Comments of OIOS. OIOS is of the view that the Board seems to have accepted the recommendation and implemented it, even if its decision was to go ahead with recommending a candidate to the Secretary-General for appointment instead of restarting the search process, despite the issues noted.

(b) Lack of succession planning

87. The performance of the current Chief Executive Officer was evaluated for the first time in 2016, some 18 months before the expiry of his first term, apparently to determine whether the incumbent's performance was adequate to be recommended for a second term starting 1 January 2018. Had that not been done, the Board would have had to appoint a search panel for a new Chief Executive Officer sufficiently in advance to allow it to recommend an appointee during its 2017 session. However, no such consideration was given in the Deputy Chief Executive Officer's case, even though it was known that the first term of the incumbent would end on 31 August 2018. In December 2017, the Board's Chair advised Board members of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer's decision to retire on 30 June 2018, two months before the end of his first term and one month before the Board's 2018 session. That decision by the Deputy Chief Executive Officer, which came at a time when it was well known that the Chief Executive Officer was on extended sick leave and with no definitive

date of return to duty, triggered a succession crisis in the Fund secretariat. Eventually, the Deputy Chief Executive Officer agreed to serve until 31 August 2018. The vacancy announcement was issued on 2 March 2018, with a closing date of 15 April 2018 (just 4.5 months before the incumbent's impending retirement and 3.5 months before the Board's 2018 session). The Board needs to prevent the recurrence of such situations through proper succession planning and the formalization of search procedures on the basis of the good practices followed in 1998 and 2004, rather than devising new procedures each time.

Recommendation 13

The Board should ensure proper succession planning for the positions of Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer to allow adequate time for their competitive selection based on pre-established procedures.

Comments of the Board. The Board accepted the recommendation.

VI. Board comments on the draft report

88. The Board's complete response to the draft of the present report is provided in the annex. Table 3 provides excerpts of the Board's general comments on the report and OIOS remarks thereon.

Table 3
Board comments and OIOS remarks

Board comments	*OIOS remarks*
The great majority of Board members expressed serious concern regarding the process by which OIOS had conducted the audit, which many viewed as being flawed and unprofessional.	Considering the magnitude of effort involved, OIOS deployed a large team comprising four auditors at the P-4 level and one audit assistant, who were closely supervised by the Chief of Section and senior management of the Internal Audit Division. The auditors who performed the audit had one or more of the top qualifications relevant to the profession (i.e., Certified Internal Auditor, Certified Public Accountant, Certified Information Systems Auditor, Certified Fraud Examiner and Certified Financial Analyst). They performed their work on the basis of the audit process explained in a detailed terms of reference issued on 22 February 2018, which was circulated to all Board members, their alternates, the Audit Committee and the secretaries of the staff pension committees of all 23 Fund member organizations, who were also informed of the audit findings and recommendations at each stage of the process (i.e., the exit conference, detailed audit results and the draft report). OIOS diligently and fully complied with the International Professional Practices Framework established by the Institute of Internal Auditors.

Board comments	*OIOS remarks*
	At the request of the Chair of the sixty-fourth session of the Board, the Audit Committee reviewed the OIOS draft report and supported most of the audit recommendations, including all five recommendations that OIOS considered to be critical (i.e., recommendations 2, 5, 8, 9 and 10). In its report to the Board, the Audit Committee did not raise any concerns regarding the audit process and found no flaws or unprofessionalism. OIOS asserts that the audit was conducted by competent auditors in a transparent and professional manner.
The great majority of members commented that the audit had not been based on fully verified facts and that reasonable professional care had not been taken to obtain sufficient and factual evidence to support the conclusions drawn and recommendations made.	The Board's response provides no evidence of any factual inaccuracies in the report to support the assertion that "the audit had not been based on fully verified facts". The detailed results of the present audit, which were issued for the Board's comments on 1 June 2018, contained 98 footnotes that cited references to the underlying documents on which the factual statements were based. OIOS maintains that the report is based on facts that were verified as thoroughly as possible, and that the conclusions drawn and recommendations made are based on verified facts.
It was noted by a number of members that the rules and regulations of the Fund had not been adequately cited or taken into account in the drafting of the report and its recommendations.	As explained above, the detailed results of the present audit contained 98 footnotes that cited references to the relevant documents, including regulations and rules wherever appropriate. The existing governance structure has been established and institutionalized through the regulations and rules of the Fund. Any recommendations to modify the governance structure must therefore look beyond the existing regulations and rules, rather than be constrained by them, because no change to the existing governance arrangements would be possible without changing the existing regulations and rules. Therefore, the relevance of the Fund's existing regulations and rules would be limited in an audit such as the present audit.
In addition, the view was expressed that the drafting of the report did not follow the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, in particular standard 1220.A1, which requires internal auditors to exercise due professional care by considering the extent of the work required to achieve the audit objective, given that OIOS did not observe the session of the Board, which is its central act of governance. It was also observed that OIOS had largely failed to reflect the	The audit team's research involved more than 25,000 pages of documentation pertaining to the last 15 years (and beyond, for certain issues) to study the evolution of the Board's governance structure and related processes. The audit team sought written input from 33 Board members, 17 alternates, 14 members of the Board's committees, and the secretaries of all 23 staff pension committees through detailed questionnaires covering the areas pertaining to the Board's governance. The audit team conducted in-depth interviews with a representative sample of individuals belonging to all constituent groups. The sample comprised 21 Board members and alternates, who represented 7 of the Fund's 23 member organizations, along with four representatives of FAFICS, in addition to at least 15 senior managers and staff members of the Fund. The audit team also observed the meetings of the Assets and Liabilities

Board comments	*OIOS remarks*
comments and views of all member constituencies and organizations of the Board.	Monitoring Committee, the Audit Committee and the United Nations Staff Pension Committee to understand the work of those committees in the context of the Fund's governance. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 72/262 A, OIOS is required to submit the present report to the Assembly at its seventy-third session, to be considered in the context of the Fund. To that end, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management provided a slot date of 22 August 2018 for submitting the report to the Department for publication.[1] Those timelines made it impossible for OIOS to observe the Board's session (which was held from 27 July to 3 August 2018) during the audit fieldwork phase, which had to conclude by the end of May 2018 to allow time for drafting the detailed audit results and the draft report for the Board's comments. Nevertheless, the combination of extensive document review, detailed questionnaires, in-depth interviews and the in-person observation of committee meetings, as explained above, along with the experience gained from OIOS participation in the Board's meetings over the past several years, were adequate to conclude the audit fieldwork with due professional care and to achieve the audit objectives. OIOS therefore reiterates that the audit was conducted in accordance with the International Professional Practices Framework established by the Institute of Internal Auditors and reaffirms the validity and relevance of the audit's findings and recommendations. Although the Chair of the sixty-fourth session did not provide any comments on the audit findings and recommendations on the Board's behalf or in her own capacity at any stage of the audit process, OIOS received comments from FAFICS, the representatives of the United Nations participants, and the staff pension committee of one specialized agency, which were fully taken into account before the draft report was submitted on 17 July 2018 for consideration by the Board at its sixty-fifth session. Since it was impossible to meaningfully reflect the opposing and conflicting views received on the audit findings and recommendations, OIOS relied on the Board, to whom all recommendations were addressed, to provide its comments on the draft report. The Board provided its response on 14 August 2018, which is fully reflected in the present report.

[1] In late July 2018, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management indicated its willingness to allow OIOS additional time to submit the report, if required, after incorporating the Board's response to the draft report. But even that additional time did not allow OIOS the opportunity to observe the Board's sixty-fifth session as part of the audit fieldwork, which ended on 31 May 2018.

Board comments	*OIOS remarks*
A number of Board Members observed that the audit had been conducted in a very short timeframe that was not commensurate with the importance of the various governance issues it was examining.	The audit commenced on 17 January 2018 and the draft report was issued for the Board's consideration on 17 July 2018. The timeframe for completing the audit was set in accordance with Assembly resolution 72/262 A and the deadline for submission of the report to the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management for publishing. OIOS is satisfied that the available time of six months was adequate to examine all relevant governance issues in sufficient depth.
They underscored that they had been given a very limited amount of time for thorough consideration of the draft report's far-reaching recommendations.	OIOS submitted a summary of the audit findings and recommendations to the Chair of the Board's sixty-fourth session on 21 May 2018 for discussion at the exit conference, which was held on 25 May 2018. The Chair circulated the document to all parties concerned (i.e., the Board members and alternates, the secretaries of all staff pension committees and FAFICS representatives). OIOS then formally issued the detailed results of the audit to the Chair on 1 June 2018, who circulated the document to all parties concerned. OIOS then issued the draft report to the Chair of the Board's sixty-fourth session on 17 July 2018, who circulated it to those same individuals. Therefore, between May and July 2018, the Board members and others were given adequate time and opportunity to consider the audit findings and recommendations and to provide comments thereon.

(*Signed*) Heidi **Mendoza**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services
September 2018

Annex

Comments received from the Chair of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board on the draft report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the comprehensive audit of the governance structure and related processes of the Board

1. The Board took note of and had an initial discussion on the draft report of OIOS on the audit of the governance structure and related processes of the Board of 17 July 2018. The great majority of Board members expressed serious concern regarding the process by which OIOS had conducted the audit, which many viewed as having been flawed and unprofessional. The great majority of members commented that the audit had not been based on fully verified facts and that reasonable professional care had not been taken to obtain sufficient and factual evidence to support the conclusions drawn and recommendations made.

2. In the view of the representatives of the United Nations participants, the audit was well researched and drafted, properly conducted, of a professional standard and based on verified facts.

3. It was noted by a number of members that the rules and regulations of the Fund had not been adequately cited or taken into account in the drafting of the report and its recommendations. In addition, the view was expressed that the drafting of the report did not follow the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, in particular standard 1220.A1, which requires internal auditors to exercise due professional care by considering the extent of the work required to achieve the audit objective, given that OIOS did not observe the session of the Board, which is its central act of governance. It was also observed that OIOS had largely failed to reflect the comments and views of all member constituencies and organizations of the Board.

4. The representatives of the United Nations participants believed that the rules and regulations had been correctly referred to and that members and their constituencies had been provided opportunities to have their views considered at every stage of the process.

5. A number of Board members observed that the audit had been conducted in a very short time frame that was not commensurate with the importance of the various governance issues it was examining. They underscored that they had been given a very limited amount of time for thorough consideration of the draft report's far-reaching recommendations.

6. The representatives of the United Nations participants stated that the time frame for the audit had been adequate and that Board members had been given the necessary time.

7. The Board takes its responsibility seriously and strongly believes that governance issues are of great importance and that their consideration is a common interest and concern of all Board members, as a means to contribute to improving efficiency and decision-making processes and enhancing the credibility of the Board for the benefit of the participants, constituencies and beneficiaries of the Fund.

8. **In the table below, the Board offers responses to the OIOS recommendations and requests that they be incorporated into the final report of OIOS to the General Assembly.** In accordance with the prevailing practice, the Board will follow-up on the accepted recommendations.

Responses by the Pension Board to the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its audit of the governance structure of the Board

OIOS recommendation	*Board response*
1. The Board should: (a) Establish clear terms of reference for its members outlining, inter alia, the desirable competencies for their appointment and any appropriate restrictions or limitations; (b) Review its current methodology for self-evaluation to make the exercise more effective and useful.	(a) The Board does not accept the recommendation. The membership of the Board is determined in accordance with the Regulations and rules of procedure. However, the procedures currently followed by constituent groups could be strengthened to ensure that their representatives fulfil their fiduciary and other responsibilities. (b) The Board accepts the recommendation.
2. The Board should: (a) Implement the General Assembly's request to submit proposals for fair and equitable representation of member organizations on the Board to reflect the actual distribution of active participants in the Fund, present and future trends in Fund participation and the changing nature of the Fund's member organizations; (b) Implement a rotation scheme that allows eligible member organizations to share the rotating seats in a fair and equitable manner.	The Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, does not accept the recommendation as currently formulated and will establish a working group to consider issues of participation, rotation and fair and equitable representation without any presumption of outcome and taking into account the Board's previous review on this matter.
3. The Board should determine the number of seats to be allotted to retiree representatives and facilitate their direct election as full Board members with voting rights to ensure transparent and democratic representation of beneficiaries and their interests.	The Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, does not accept the recommendation because this would undermine the tripartite nature of the Board and because retirees are not affiliated with member organizations.
4. The Board should establish appropriate mechanisms to avoid conflicts of interest between representatives of FAFICS and the management of the Fund.	The Board will establish appropriate mechanisms to avoid conflicts of interest between the management of the Fund and the constituent groups of the Board.
5. The Board should strengthen its governance of the Fund by: (a) Increasing the frequency of meetings of the Standing Committee to provide more effective oversight of the Fund's operations; (b) Entrusting the Standing Committee to act on the Board's behalf during periods when the Board is not in session; (c) Requiring the Board's other committees and the secretariat of the Fund to periodically submit their reports to the Standing Committee for better oversight and to reduce the burden on the Board's annual sessions.	The Board takes note of this recommendation and wishes to point out that section B of the rules of procedure defines the role of the Standing Committee, and that the possibility of increased frequency of meetings as necessary or when requested by the Board is already foreseen in rule B.4, which states: "The Standing Committee shall act, when necessary, on behalf of the Board when the Board is not in session. It shall decide individual cases referred to it, exercise a general control on the operations of the Fund and perform such additional specific functions as may from time to time be assigned to it by the Board. The

OIOS recommendation	*Board response*
	Standing Committee may on its own initiative and shall at the request of the Board or of any staff pension committee initiate preparatory work on any policy questions to the end that such questions be effectively considered by the Board."
6. The Board should retire its Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee and reinforce the interaction between the Committee of Actuaries and the Investments Committee to safeguard the Fund's long-term solvency.	The Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, does not accept the recommendation and decides to retain the Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee to satisfy the purposes and objectives outlined in section 1, paragraph 2, of its terms of reference, which states: "In order to assist the Board of the [Fund] in carrying out its responsibility for the overall management of the Fund, the [Assets and Liability Monitoring] Committee will work with the support of the Fund's management, the Investments Committee, the Committee of Actuaries and the Consulting Actuary to monitor the solvency of the Fund and to provide advice and recommendations to the Board with regard to risk management, funding policy, asset-liability management and investment policy."
7. The Board should, in consultation with its Audit Committee, strengthen the criteria for the Committee's membership, its independence and its means to hold the management of the Fund accountable for the accuracy and completeness of the information presented to it.	The Board accepts the recommendation.
8. The Board should: (a) Separate the roles of its Secretary and the Fund's Chief Executive Officer; (b) Establish its own secretariat that is independent from the management of the Fund; (c) Reconstitute the Executive Office such that it is directly responsible to both entities of the Fund for the provision of administrative services.	(a) and (b) The Board, with the exception of the representatives of the United Nations participants, does not accept the recommendation. The Board will establish mechanisms for ensuring proper segregation of roles, such as the setting of the Pension Board agenda. (c) The Board accepts this recommendation and will request the management of the Fund to resolve this issue as a matter of priority.
9. The Board should: (a) Establish mechanisms to ensure that annual performance evaluations of the Chief Executive Officer and the Deputy Chief Executive Officer are conducted and documented based on clear metrics to hold them accountable;	The Board accepts the recommendation.

OIOS recommendation	*Board response*
(b) Ensure that the secretariat of the Fund is held accountable for annually appraising the performance of its staff.	
10. The Board should take effective measures to ensure that the secretariat of the Fund sets the appropriate tone at the top with regard to integrity and ethical values.	The Board accepts the recommendation.
11. The Board should: (a) Determine the appropriateness of the distribution of resources between programme and support functions; (b) Strengthen monitoring to ensure that the secretariat of the Fund utilizes resources in accordance with legislative decisions.	The Board accepts the recommendation by noting that it relates to a long-standing practice of the Board. The Board will continue that practice and perform its functions in monitoring the use and distribution of resources as a matter of priority.
12. The Board should assess the composition and procedures of the search panel for the Deputy Chief Executive Officer in the light of the deviations in and apparent arbitrariness of the process and determine whether the search should be restarted to ensure integrity and fairness in a competitive exercise.	The Board does not accept this recommendation as currently formulated. The Board assessed the composition and the procedures of the search panel, which were formulated during the intersessional period, considered them to be appropriate and therefore proceeded with the recommendation to the Secretary-General for the selection of the Deputy Chief Executive Officer. The Board will reflect on the lessons learned for future search panels.
13. The Board should ensure proper succession planning for the positions of Chief Executive Officer and Deputy Chief Executive Officer to allow adequate time for their competitive selection based on pre-established procedures.	The Board accepts the recommendation.